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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa .... (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Butagira (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 9 and 111 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/61/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): At the Millennium Summit in September 2005, world leaders rightly pledged to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the United Nations system. Today's United Nations is doing much more than the United Nations of some 20 years ago. The challenge, both for the United Nations and for us, the Member States, is to ensure that the demands of the United Nations are met rapidly and efficiently. That requires reform of the United Nations — mostly reform of its management structure. However, United Nations reform cannot take place without reform of the Security Council.

It is a well-known fact that expansion of the main United Nations peace and security body has proved to be a highly sensitive and difficult issue. It will not be an easy endeavour in the future, either. However, we all agree that it is more than necessary. That is why, instead of doubting, we should begin to act now, without further delay.

We have stated many times, while knowing that there is no perfect solution in view, why we support the concept of the Group of Four (G4): expanding the Council to 25 members in both categories, permanent and non-permanent, with the inclusion of developing countries in both. Any expansion and restructuring of the Council must include permanent seats for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean so that the concerns of the developing countries can be addressed.

While we continue to support last year's draft resolution submitted by the G4, we are aware that new ideas have emerged and that the call for an interim solution might gain ground. Although we believe that the G4 concept still provides us with the most realistic way to reform the Council, we are open to discussing the new ideas with an open mind.

As we consider expanding the Security Council, we should not overlook reform of its working methods. Among the many options for achieving that is the proposal submitted by the group of five small nations. While that proposal is well intentioned, we continue to doubt its practicality and comprehensiveness, because we believe that reform of the Council's working methods should go hand in hand with structural reform of the Council itself.

I wish to reiterate that my country has no vested interest in reform, other than our desire for better functioning and greater authority of the Council. That is why we call for action to overcome the current deadlock.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative the State of Qatar, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the work that he has been doing in the Council and also for presenting the report on the Council's activities to the General Assembly (A/61/2).

My delegation has awaited this report of the Security Council with particular interest, because it is the first that was to reflect the will expressed by the heads of State and Government of our countries during the 2005 World Summit. In particular, Costa Rica hoped to see how the mandate to improve the accountability of the Security Council to the General Assembly would be fulfilled. We hoped to see substantial progress in this area.

But when we study this report, we are forced to observe that the improvement that we expected has not taken place. The report we are discussing today serves the interests of the Security Council, but does not contain the answers that the General Assembly has been asking for.

With respect to our debate last year on this same item, we hoped as well that we would resume the practice of convening a meeting of the Security Council for an in-depth discussion of its annual work and to approve the report. Regrettably, that has not taken place either. It is crucial that the 2002 experience — convening a meeting of the Council to discuss its work — be taken up as a practice that can only enrich all of us and effectively benefit our peoples. I would like to recall that that gratifying experience took place thanks to the insistence of the delegation of Singapore, which was then a member of the Security Council. With the same purpose of increasing the effectiveness, transparency, responsibility and accountability of the Council, Costa Rica today joins with Singapore, Jordan, Liechtenstein and Switzerland in the group of five small nations — the "Small Five".

Our position with respect to United Nations reform in general and that of the Security Council in particular is well known. However, we take this opportunity to highlight a few points.

I begin by saying that for Costa Rica, the theme of raising the number of members of the Security Council is important only as a mechanism to restore the geographic representation that we lost in the light of the historical evolution of the last 60 years. The fundamental guide in expanding the number of Council members should not be simply the economic contribution of those who contribute the most, or the responsibilities that some States have in peacekeeping. In addition, and above all, increasing the number of members on the Security Council should respond to the necessary representation of the interests of the poorest sectors of mankind, of those who have less access to the benefits to scientific and technological progress, those who suffer the most from hunger and from war, and those who pay most dearly for the deterioration of our planet.

Increasing the number of permanent members is a complex topic and could have consequences that we do not want. In June 2005, the delegation of Costa Rica circulated a study that proves without any doubt that those who are permanent members of the Security Council not only hold the most powerful positions within the Organization but also convert themselves into permanent members of the most important bodies and subsidiary organs of the system. We are deeply concerned that, in expanding the category of permanent members of the Council, we could restrict in that way the number of seats available for other States in the organs and subsidiary bodies of the system.

Thus we believe that before we discuss the possible increase in the number of permanent members, we should discuss seriously the measures and guarantees that would prevent that dangerous snowball effect, which has been evident so far. Further restricting access to the principal organs of the system and its subsidiary bodies could only result in weakening the sense of belonging on the part of many of those excluded, to the detriment of the international legitimacy of the United Nations.

We would like to reiterate that for us it is crucial to make major efforts to substantially improve the working methods of the Security Council. It is in improving these methods that we find the answers to the most important questions that weigh on the Council and that bear on the effectiveness of the work of the Organization itself. In order to have a Security Council that has greater legitimacy and that better meets the concerns of Member States and of international public opinion, our efforts should focus primarily on improving the Council's working methods.

In this respect, we believe that the work done by the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation is a very valuable step in the right direction. We would like to acknowledge the work of Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, Permanent Representative of Japan, whose leadership was decisive in this task. We would also like to see the effective implementation of the recommendations of this Working Group, recommendations that for us represent a starting point, not a destination.

We believe that there is still much left to be done to restore the prestige of the Organization and to improve the legitimacy of its decisions. Although many say that they do not understand what we are referring to when we talk about transparency and accountability, we will not relent in insisting on the need to have more and more information on the Council's activities, nor we will not relent in our determination to make sure that all, without exception, explain their conduct to the Assembly.

We are living in a time of transparency and accountability. This phenomenon is taking place everywhere, and the best-kept secrets come to light. Governments, sooner or later, will answer for their actions, first of all to their own peoples, and also to the international community.

Today, more than ever before, we have to restore the balance of power between the General Assembly and the Security Council. We have to revive the intention of the founders of the Organization that is so clearly expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. In accordance with the Charter, the Council acts in representing all of the Member States and its primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. Logically, from this, the Council should inform the Assembly in a timely manner on its actions or its lack of action so that the Assembly can exercise the proper control and, if necessary, take the corrective measures that the situation requires.

However, the Security Council's reports cannot simply be an accounting of the facts, which is what we have before us today. The General Assembly has the right to see documents that are more analytical, including assessments of the effectiveness of the measures adopted by the Council and the positions of its members in adopting them. In that regard, we have often called upon the Council to provide the Assembly with special reports — in accordance with Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter — whenever the Council decides to establish a new peacekeeping operation or substantially alter the mandate of such operations or sets up new sanctions regimes.

We also believe that the Security Council must provide the General Assembly with a report whenever a draft resolution is vetoed. That is especially important in the world in which we live in today. Our action or lack of action can be perceived immediately in all corners of the Earth. In this age of information, we cannot fail to have the necessary political will to achieve fluid, effective and thorough communication among all protagonists in the United Nations system.

We have many concerns. Before I conclude, I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to the power of the veto, which we believe has lost much of the original purpose for which it was conceived. This instrument, which was justifiable at its inception, requires that it be used responsibly in the global village in which we live today. The veto cannot be the last resort of special interests to the detriment of overall interests. Nor can it be a mechanism that leads to inaction. Above and beyond a thorough debate on this issue, we would like to emphasize today the need for urgent reform that eliminates, or at least effectively limits, the use of the veto in cases of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross violations of human rights.

We are pleased to note the growing awareness of the reform of the Organization which is taking place today. We believe that reform will not be complete unless we once and for all take on the overall reform of the Security Council. We have made some progress, but much remains to be done.

Costa Rica would like to reiterate its commitment to the Organization and to the vision we have for it in the twenty-first century, in order that we can together clearly respond to the peoples of the United Nations so that they will never again be subject to our inaction in the light of the horrors that many people of the planet experience today.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, the current President of the Security Council, for presenting the report of the Security Council (A/61/2). Qatar's role in the Council is another example of the invaluable contribution that an elected member, and a small country, can make to its work.

Pakistan fully endorses the comprehensive statement made at the previous meeting by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. The concerns expressed by the Non-Aligned Movement include double standards in the work of the Council, prolonged inaction and silence in some cases, quick resort to the threat or authorization of sanctions and enforcement action on others, lack of coordination with other principal organs and encroachment on their mandates, and non-transparent and non-inclusive decision-making, which is aggravated by the abuse of the veto. We earnestly hope that the proposals advanced by the Non-Aligned Movement will be considered seriously.

In recent years the Council has had relative success in dealing with internal crises and complex emergencies, in particular in Africa. United Nations peacekeeping has significantly enlarged and evolved over the past decades into a vital tool in halting and ameliorating several conflicts — in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burundi. We hope such successes will be extended elsewhere. Pakistan takes pride in its role and contribution to those efforts as the largest troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Notwithstanding those successes, the Council has failed to deal effectively with peacebuilding and development. Without that several success stories could regress to failure, as happened with Haiti. There are also several ongoing conflicts, especially in Asia and Africa, that continue to fester, and where the Council is not always regarded as an honest broker due to one-sided decisions. In vast sections of public opinion, especially in the Islamic world, the Security Council is viewed as ineffective and partisan. It is widely believed that the Council is controlled by, and acts on behalf of, some permanent members and other major Powers. It does not reflect the concerns and aspirations of the majority of the small and developing countries of the United Nations.

The Council is not dealing directly with some of the major conflicts and threats to international peace and security. The implementation of some resolutions is actively pursued while others are ignored. There is inaction even in the face of the most obvious acts of aggression, as we witnessed in Lebanon. On the other hand, there is proaction, even interference, in the internal affairs of sovereign States, even where clearly there is no threat to international peace and security.

The provisions for the pacific settlement of disputes remain grossly under-utilized by the Council. In contrast, there is a dangerous tendency to have recourse, too often and too soon, to measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, including sanctions and enforcement action. We hope the United Nations will not to be placed in a position to participate in the errors of intervention by the invocation of the responsibility to protect. The limits of the use of force have now been fully revealed.

Meanwhile the Council's encroachment on the mandates and jurisdiction of other principal organs, especially the General Assembly, continues unabated. That upsets the delicate balance envisaged under the Charter and jeopardizes the overall effectiveness of the United Nations system.

Despite recent efforts to improve transparency, much of the Council's real work and decision-making takes place behind closed doors, often in exclusive conclaves that exclude even the elected members of the Security Council. Often, the media are more informed than those members. Most inequitably, the Member States directly concerned with a dispute or conflict are not allowed to participate in the Council's deliberations; nor are they even properly consulted. The Council's annual report does not shed any light on the rationale for and process of decision-making. Hence, non-members hunt for and gather information.

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the United Nations Secretariat seems to be responsive only to the major Powers. Indeed, the leadership of the principal departments of the Secretariat is considered as the heritage and right of some permanent members.

It is therefore quite evident that comprehensive reform of the Security Council is essential to provide it greater legitimacy and credibility. The reform of the working methods of the Council is part and parcel of such a comprehensive reform. Pakistan supports the so-called S-5 initiative. However, in our view, it does not go far enough to address some of the real issues I have mentioned.

Pakistan agrees that a comprehensive reform of the Council must cover the vital issue of the veto. It is now clear that the veto will not be surrendered or shared by the five permanent members. However, there may be ways to address this issue. The power of the veto is the power to block decisions. To equalize power, we could consider raising the proportional majority required for the adoption of resolutions in an enlarged Council — for example, by increasing it to two thirds from the present ratio of three fifths.

In an enlarged Council, a higher ratio for approval of resolutions could provide its elected members, including developing countries, a greater possibility to influence the decision-making. It is not through a permanent or long-term presence that the balance of power in the Council can be changed or challenged. It can happen by increasing the number and role of the elected members in the enlarged Council.

We agree that the composition of an enlarged Council should better reflect current realities, but current realities are complex. The changes of the past decades have not only created some large and emerging Powers; there are also a number of middle-sized States that play an equally important role in international and regional peace and security. Furthermore, there is also a large number of small States, mostly developing countries, that can contribute significantly to the Council's work. The examples of Singapore and Qatar come readily to mind.

The most tangible contribution to peace and security is not wealth, military power or population. It is determined by the degree of the commitment of a Member State to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, its adherence to United Nations resolutions, its participation in United Nations peacekeeping and its willingness to have recourse to the pacific settlement of disputes. The best way to determine a State's qualifications for membership on the Security Council, whether more or less frequent, is through the democratic method of periodic elections by its peers, that is, by the General Assembly, on whose behalf the Security Council is supposed to act.

Pakistan's position is well known. It was reflected in the 2005 Uniting for Consensus draft resolution (A/59/L.68). That was a most feasible and equitable proposal. Pakistan continues to believe that permanent membership for a few individual States will deny the opportunity for equitable representation to all other States. The smaller the expansion of the Council, therefore, the greater the need to find ways to ensure equitable representation for all States.

An acceptable formula for rotation could provide the means for such equitable representation. Such rotation, combined with regional representation, may also offer possibilities for the fuller representation of countries members of various groups of States. We are not restricted to options A and B of the High-level Panel on threats, challenges and change. The acceptability of enlargement, and its nature, will depend considerably upon, first, the size of expansion and, secondly, the methodology adopted to ensure the equitable representation of all groups of countries, including large, medium and small States.

The concept of long-term membership should not become a guise for a permanent presence. However, Pakistan remains open to the idea of immediate re-election, whose modalities would need to be determined according to the size and structure of any model while ensuring overall balanced representation of geographical groups and other subregional and political constituencies.

The Security Council, as is evident from its wide-ranging agenda, is increasingly assuming a larger role in the management of international relations. It is evident that all Member States have a direct and vital interest in the work of the Council and its decision-making. All Member States therefore have an equally crucial stake in the reform of the Council. That is why it is essential that reform should be decided by consensus or the widest possible agreement. The key lesson of last year is that no proposal designed to serve the interest of a few individual States can expect to win the support of the required majority of Member States. Without consensus or the widest possible agreement, the prospects for ratification of any Charter amendment for the reform of the Council will remain dismal.

If we are to achieve consensus or widest possible agreement, all proponents will need to review their positions and explore fresh ideas with flexibility and creativity. The dinner meeting hosted by President Musharraf of Pakistan and Prime Minister Prodi of Italy, along with other like-minded countries on 20 September in New York, was designed to initiate the process of such fresh thinking and dialogue on Security Council reform. We were most encouraged by the positive and constructive response of all the participants at that meeting.

We can conduct further informal contacts and consultations in any appropriate forum where ideas and options can be freely explored and discussed. Seminars or retreats can be organized for such brainstorming and exploratory sessions. In such informal processes, we should seek to elaborate possible approaches to an equitable compromise solution. Various alternative models could be developed for consideration. That should be an open and inclusive process. We should avoid labels and groups. Restricted initiatives with partisan agendas will only divide us. Our efforts should be aimed at bridging, not creating, divides within the membership of the United Nations. We would be grateful to the President of the General Assembly if she could lead such a process. Pakistan is committed to participate constructively and to work together with all Member States in a collective endeavour to achieve consensus.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): We are once again convened in this Hall to share our views on the reform of the Security Council. Since our last meeting on the same subject, many major political and military crises have erupted around the world and democratic elections have taken place, changing the political landscape of small and large powerful countries alike. Unfortunately, however, during that time we have been unable to inch away from the more than 60-year-old crystallized format of the Security Council. Despite the promising meeting organized by the leaders of Italy and Pakistan, very little has followed. We therefore once again find ourselves at the starting point.

It is obvious that most Member States want comprehensive and equitable reform of the Council. I believe that nobody challenges the contention that certain countries and continents deserve more representation on the Security Council for the good of all. It is understandable that the demographic, economic and political developments they have experienced in the last 60 years give them new relevant status. We want the Council to play a central and legitimate role. Its membership should therefore be truly representative.

At this very point, nobody questions enlarging the Council or the need for more transparent working methods. The time is right to create a new format for the Council itself, as well as to refocus on its responsibility vis-à-vis the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies.

I ask the President of the General Assembly to take the lead in convening all Members at the beginning of the new year — nobody should be left behind — under a format that allows each Member State to negotiate, in an open and truly democratic way, the new rules for our new Security Council. I hope that the leadership of the General Assembly will help us to move forward in this delicate but vital reform.

Mrs. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Ambassador of Qatar, current President of the Security Council, for his detailed presentation on the report of the Council (A/61/2) to the General Assembly. My delegation would also like to thank the Ambassadors of the Bahamas and the Netherlands for their work as Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council.

The report on the activities and issues addressed by the Council during the period of August 2005 to July 2006 makes possible a broad review of the situations in regions that have a high potential to affect international peace and security. In accordance with the functions and powers conferred by the Charter of the United Nations, the Council's current actions should be focused on resolving issues on its agenda.

In that regard, we share the concern expressed in various Council meetings about the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East.

We would also like to point to the efforts of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). We trust that the current stabilization phase will be completed so that the support of the international community to that country can be focused primarily on promoting sustained and long-term economic development programmes. We are certain that the current Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti and head of MINUSTAH will contribute positively to achieving that goal.

With regard to the Security Council reform process, Colombia attaches particular priority to the review and updating of the Council's working methods. We believe that that aspect and an increase in the membership of the Security Council in the non-permanent member category are logical outcomes of the changes that have taken place in recent decades at the global and regional levels. The Council's working methods must be adapted to the need to increase participation by States that are not members of the Council, improve accountability on the part of countries that are members and achieve greater transparency and openness in the work of that body.

Greater participation by non-member States in the work of the Council would make it possible for us to have better information about national and regional realities. It would also make it easier for the Council to adopt decisions that take into account the conditions in each country and the specificities of a given situation. And it would contribute to avoiding unique or general formulas that could prove inappropriate in certain situations.

Moreover, the diverse nature of the situations on the Council's agenda makes it necessary to carry out more consultations, as necessary, with non-member States, regional groups, regional organizations and other relevant actors. That would contribute to better-informed decisions and to viable and lasting solutions.

The Security Council must be accountable to the General Assembly. That is the only way to ensure that its efforts are adequately revealed in the universal space that is the United Nations, as well as the only way to guarantee its essentially multilateral character. In that regard, the Council's informative briefings to all States should be frequent and exhaustive, so that delegations can be fully informed of the Council's activities.

We would also like to underscore the importance of the Council's focusing its efforts on threats to international peace and security. Diluting the Council's agenda with issues that are not directly related to its mandate has an effect on the Council's efficiency and calls into question the legitimacy of its functions.

The issue of the veto continues to be a sensitive and complicated matter. Colombia has expressed its opposition to that privilege ever since the first proposals were put forth for the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations, in 1945. Sixty years later, the anachronism of the veto is even more pronounced, as is the desirability of eliminating the veto in the future. Until it is finally eliminated, the use of the veto should be limited so as to bring about greater democratization and efficiency in the work of the Council.

We believe that broad consultation on the Council's methods of work would contribute to the development of additional proposals to improve the work. Any initiative to that end should be approached with an open mind and in accordance with its own merits. Moreover, it should be implemented without waiting for progress in other areas of reform. The United Nations Charter provides the necessary flexibility for that purpose.

Colombia shares the opinion expressed recently by the Secretary-General with regard to the importance of finding common ground for action in the process of Council reform. We agree that there is an opportunity to build bridges, reduce the gap between positions and generate the expected momentum. Only an outcome forged on the basis of consensus can provide a strong foundation for the reform of the Council. That premise is crucial in order to reach a just and equitable agreement, by which the sovereign equality of States can be fully applied. Likewise, we must make progress on proposals that would avoid differentiating between Member States, which would be consistent with the objective of achieving improved representation on the Council.

The proposal submitted by the Uniting for Consensus movement for the expansion of the number of non-permanent Security Council members meets the aforementioned criteria. It is both realistic and flexible. It avoids the extension of privileges and differentiation between countries. And it pays greater heed to the principles of equitable geographic distribution and the sovereign equality of States.

In this sense, the candidate selection processes at the regional level would have greater validity and political support, as equal opportunity of access to Security Council seats would be guaranteed. Furthermore, a greater number of non-permanent members would make the Council truly representative of the diverse realities and continuous changes that are taking place across the world.

The scope of the challenges facing the United Nations makes it increasingly necessary to have convergence between States and to bring together approaches on reform of the Organization. Cooperation, consensus and joint efforts are essential if we want to effectively advance the issue of working methods and equitable representation on the Council. Only in this way will an agreement be reached that would be robust enough to adapt that principal body of the United Nations to new conditions and challenges.

Colombia expresses its willingness to go beyond informal consultations and a mere exchange of views towards a genuine negotiating process with clear goals and defined procedures. If the debate during the current session of the General Assembly creates a space for movement in that direction, we will have taken a positive, more promising and credible step.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend thanks to the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and to express our appreciation for her efforts in conducting the work of the General Assembly.

We welcome the work that the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions has carried out under the leadership of the delegation of Japan. We look forward to the implementation of all the recommendations set out in the note by the President of the Council (S/2006/507), including the recommendation that the Security Council should conduct effective consultations with States Members of the United Nations on draft resolutions before the Council on situations and conflicts on its agenda and that it should seek the views of Member States that are parties to a conflict and/or other interested and affected parties. Such an approach is a natural imperative if the Council is to strengthen the results it seeks to achieve in the maintenance of international peace and security pursuant to the Charter.

The President took the Chair.

We also welcome the report's emphasis on the importance of Security Council coordination with troop-contributing countries through meetings to exchange ideas in the preliminary phases of planning for any United Nations peacekeeping mission. It is crucial that these consultations be candid and transparent if they are to achieve the greatest measure of effectiveness.

Although many such positive elements are included in the report, the Security Council has yet to take any steps to implement them. We urge that such recommendations be implemented in all their aspects and in a balanced manner, with a view to making their implementation a normal practice as the Security Council fulfils its responsibilities.

We believe that reform of the working methods of the Security Council is an ongoing, gradual and developing process. Thus, we see in the views set forth in the draft resolution submitted during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — the elements that are required to deal with the issue of the Security Council's mechanisms and working methods in a radical way. The ideas included in that draft resolution can lay a sound foundation for comprehensive and integrated Security Council reform. Therefore, we look forward to working with the members of the S-5 to develop these ideas, so that they can be included in a new draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly next year.

We maintain our position that United Nations reform will not be complete unless the Security Council is reformed through developing its working methods and expanding its membership in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. Our adherence to that principle reflects our earlier commitments, pledges and positions on this question. In particular, we support ideas that lay the democratic foundation for expanding the membership of the Security Council; here, we believe that the Arab States deserve to be continuously represented on the Council.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): With respect to United Nations reform issues, the Outcome Document of the World Summit of September 2005 (resolution 60/1) remains our road map. As the months progress, we are steadily implementing the agenda that was set out by our leaders. We have embarked with renewed vigour on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. We have established a Peacebuilding Commission and a Human Rights Council. We have adopted a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and resolutions on revitalization of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and we are now discussing system-wide coherence. The list of accomplishments is indeed growing, but it does not yet include the Security Council.

Some say that we should not reform the Security Council just for the sake of reform. And they are right: the Security Council is one of the more effective bodies of the United Nations. In recent years, the Council has adopted an average of 60 to 80 resolutions annually, a sharp increase compared with the 10 to 15 during the cold war. The Council stepped in when new threats arose, such as terrorism and proliferation, and it is increasingly addressing the nexus between security, development and human rights.

However, the Outcome Document hits the nail on the head when it describes the ultimate goal of Council reform as being "to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*).

Of course, we cannot qualify the work of the Council by just looking at the number of resolutions. Decisions of the Council have to be implemented and often require long-term efforts and dedication. In that regard, it is essential that Member States — Governments, civil society and citizens — perceive the Council's decisions as legitimate, credible and equitable. Only if those conditions are met will decisions get the extensive and sustainable military, financial and political support and involvement of the wider membership that are required.

When we take a look at some of the important decisions the Security Council has recently taken, I should mention the strengthening of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon by resolution 1701 (2006), the establishment of a follow-on United Nations mission in Timor-Leste by resolution 1704 (2006), resolution 1718 (2006) on measures related to the nuclear aspirations of North Korea, and the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by resolution 1711 (2006). In each of those situations, the Security Council, including its permanent members, relies heavily on United Nations Member States for their implementation. That concerns all of us who contribute in one way or another in that regard, but most notably those countries that have grown over time to become major players.

We cannot expect those countries to continue making large contributions to international peace and security without having a formal say in the decision-making process. During the American revolution, it was called "no taxation without representation". In his recent book on the United Nations, the historian Paul Kennedy concludes that "if the United Nations remains encrusted in its 1945 constitution, it will appear, and really be, increasingly anachronistic".

Now, few disagree that increased legitimacy leads to better implementation and increased effectiveness, but some argue that this comes at the price of less efficiency and more cumbersome decision-making. That is not necessarily so, I would say. Fortunately, much of the work of the Security Council is relatively non-controversial. On those issues, an expanded Council with new global powers on board will encourage more burden-sharing to take on leading and initiating roles. Of course, on contentious issues, decisions might be more difficult to reach, but if we take a close look at recent Security Council work, different sides or viewpoints of a debate are often already represented amongst the members. In short, expansion would not facilitate decision-making about issues such as the situations in North Korea, Iran or Darfur, but neither would it automatically and necessarily complicate matters.

Thus, reform is to a large extent about reflecting new political realities and giving a greater say to certain underrepresented regions, such as Africa. However, we firmly believe that there is another aspect of improved legitimacy and effectiveness that deserves our attention. Even on an expanded Council, a majority of United Nations Member States would only serve sporadically. Therefore, improved working methods, and most notably assured access of countries to the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies, are of the utmost importance.

That means greater consultation with those on which the resolution might have a direct bearing. It has been proposed in the past to use Article 31 of the Charter more frequently. That article stipulates that any Member State may and should be invited to participate whenever its interests are affected. Another idea that can be explored is to give regional organizations a place at the Council table on certain occasions, including at relevant closed consultations.

Additionally, a special look at the new tasks of the Security Council is warranted. It is clear that the Council has embarked on a broad interpretation of what constitutes international peace and security. Under Chapter VII, resolutions such as 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004) have been adopted, calling into being a wide array of legal obligations for United Nations Member States. To increase the legitimacy and credibility and thereby the implementation of those resolutions, a broader, deeper and more formal consultation process with Member States is required.

What kind of reform does this analysis lead to? Obviously, one of the key challenges is to determine which countries should get a bigger say in Council affairs. Can we draw a line, and where should we draw it? Is there a group emerging that is similar to the Permanent Five at the time of the birth of the Organization? It seems that many Member States do feel that the current power structure should be adapted to better reflect geopolitical realities, but at the same time they feel that the world is dynamic and that we should not replace one fixed, unchangeable structure with another.

Consequently, there is a growing interest in the idea of a transitional arrangement. Such a solution would enable some countries and underrepresented regions that might have aspirations to a permanent seat to assume and show increased responsibility for world affairs. It could thus provide them with the opportunity to exemplify their aspirations to eventually becoming permanent members and provide us with the possibility to build up trust in the functioning of a bigger Council. To paraphrase Secretary-General Kofi Annan during his farewell press conference at the United Nations in Geneva three weeks ago, we must get into the room and take it from there.

An important advantage of that approach is that it would considerably lower the stakes because we would neither reject nor endorse any proposal or idea for a permanent solution. Arguably, that would lead to more flexibility to compromise on the modalities. There are different ways and means to flesh out the arrangement, and they should be further explored. Options range from a model with long-term, re-electable and possibly rotating seats to a strong and binding review mechanism of expansion with semi-permanent seats. The interim period could also be used for trying to find the ideal size of an expanded Council. In combination with effective measures to improve the access of non-Council members when it matters to them, it could be argued that we can start at the lower end in terms of number, while keeping the option of adding a few more seats when the temporary solution is reviewed.

In conclusion, the Netherlands looks forward to engaging on a path towards comprehensive Security Council reform. In our view, once again, the key notion to keep in mind is to increase the legitimacy of the Council. We can achieve that by increased membership to cater for the medium- to large-sized countries and by increased access to cater for the small- to medium-sized countries. We suggest that the surest way to get there is through a transitional arrangement.

Procedurally, the Netherlands would welcome proposals on how to take the process further, possibly by facilitating focused consultations between interested Governments with the aim of entering into negotiations on a limited number of possible models or arrangements.

We hope that today's debate will highlight the beginning of such a process — one in which the widely shared sense of the need for Security Council reform evolves into an equally shared sense of urgency, leading to concrete discussions and a successful reform effort. We should not forget that Security Council reform remains at the heart of our endeavour to increase the very credibility and relevance of the whole of the United Nations.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I would like to thank you, Madam, for having convened this plenary meeting to discuss matters to which many delegations attach great importance: the annual report on the work of the Security Council, and Council reform.

Earlier, following the general debate in September, the President identified Security Council reform as one of the tasks that needed to be translated into action during the sixty-first session. Indeed, in the general debate, leaders of a good two thirds of the entire United Nations membership recognized Security Council reform as the key unfinished task of the institutional reform agreed to in the Outcome Document one year earlier. Many leaders referred to the Secretary-General's oft-repeated statement that no reform of the United Nations would be complete without Security Council reform. We therefore welcome today's debate and hope that it will add new impetus to our discussion and prepare the ground for concrete action in the coming months.

I wish, first, to touch briefly upon the report of the Security Council (A/61/2), while thanking Ambassador Al-Nasser of Qatar, President of the Council for the month of December, for having presented it to the General Assembly. The report gives a summary of the Council's activities over the past year, during which it addressed a number of increasingly diverse and ever-more complex problems and challenges confronting the international community. Japan has had the privilege of serving on the Council during the past two years and has participated in its work actively and — we hope — constructively.

As a member of the Council, Japan has sought to play an active role in two areas in particular, serving in the chairmanship of two of its subsidiary bodies: the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations and the

Informal Working Group dealing with working methods. Uppermost in our mind was the need to contribute to improving the transparency and broader participation of non-members, as well as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Council.

First, the recent expansion of United Nations peacekeeping operations has been remarkable, in terms of both the number of personnel and the variety of tasks entrusted to those operations. As of September 2006, 77,000 military and police personnel from 110 countries were deployed in 18 missions. The cost of those missions exceeded $5 billion in 2005. Operations of that magnitude cannot be sustained without the strong commitment of Member States in the form of personnel and financial contributions, as well as political support. Some serious issues have also come to light, such as sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and misconduct in procurement. All of that poses major new challenges in the overall management of United Nations peacekeeping operations, which will require closer attention and a timely response by Member States.

In the Security Council, the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations can serve as an effective tool for the promotion of understanding among Member States by engaging in close interactive dialogue with troop-contributing countries and other stakeholders.

It is with that in mind that we felt the need to rejuvenate the Working Group, and I believe that that has been achieved to some extent during the past two years. In the process, efforts were made to ensure the broader participation of non-members, encompassing troop-contributing countries, major financial contributing countries and other important stakeholders. An attempt was also made to bring about improved interaction between the Working Group and the Bureau of the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations — the Committee of 34.

A report on the work of the peacekeeping operations Working Group, which will give an account of these activities, will soon be issued separately. It is our hope that further efforts will be made to make good use of that Working Group with a view to enhancing cooperation and coordination, particularly with the major stakeholders to which I referred. This would also contribute to greater transparency in the work of the Council in the important area of peacekeeping operations.

Secondly, regarding the issue of improving working methods, Japan has, since February, led the effort as Chair of the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. As I reported in the debate held in plenary meeting in July, the Security Council adopted a certain number of specific measures formulated by the Working Group aimed at enhancing the efficiency and transparency of the Council's work, as well as its interaction and dialogue with non-Council members. They are annexed to the Note by the President of the Security Council contained in document S/2006/507.

Members of the Council are committed to implementing the measures set out in the Note. Admittedly, the measures agreed to so far represent a rather modest accomplishment when set against our expectations — I am the first to admit that — but we believe that it is a meaningful first step, which should be built on with further measures. It is our strong hope that the Security Council will continue to actively pursue its endeavours to improve its working methods through the Working Group in the interests of greater efficiency and transparency and broader non-member participation in its work.

At the same time, I would like to acknowledge the important contributions made by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — in submitting a draft resolution during the sixtieth session. My delegation looks forward to their continued active engagement on this important issue.

On Security Council reform, the need for a change in the Council's composition and structure is now widely accepted by almost all Member States. Many delegations, including my own, have repeatedly stressed this point, citing many reasons. The most important is the plain fact that the challenges which the United Nations and the Security Council face today differ significantly from those confronted at the time of the Organization's foundation.

In the view of many, the Security Council in its present form is no longer legitimate, nor is it as effective as it could be. The leader of one of the permanent members, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, was candid enough to admit as much in a speech delivered in the United States earlier this year. Everybody knows this to be true. In a joint communiqué issued this summer, two of the permanent five members — France and the United Kingdom — expressed their continued support for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan to be permanent members in the future, as well as for permanent seats for Africa.

The Security Council must represent the political realities of the twenty-first century. A reformed Council must let major stakeholders — on which the implementation its decisions depends — participate in its decision-making. It must ensure that developing countries have an adequate say in Security Council matters, and it must commit to meaningful reform of its working methods. All of that can be achieved only through an expansion of the Council to better reflect the realities of today's world.

In Japan, a new Government, led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has made it clear that our country intends to continue to pursue permanent membership in the Security Council as a matter of the highest priority in seeking overall United Nations reform. Prime Minister Abe recently discussed that matter with the leaders of a number of countries, including the United States, China and Russia. My Government intends to take further initiatives to that end. Japan is grateful to all the Governments that have kindly expressed their support for its aspired position.

However, the discussion on expansion of the Council has been stalemated since the end of the Assembly's fifty-ninth session. At the debate in July, many Member States stressed the need to start thinking outside the box and to get real dialogue and negotiation started, instead of simply repeating the original positions taken by the various regional and other groups. In the same vein, there were also calls for all parties to be more open-minded in their approach. For its part, Japan has been conducting informal but intensive discussions with all interested Member States, including those that publicly opposed the Group of Four (G-4) draft resolution, while maintaining the cooperation framework of the G-4.

Here, I would like to reiterate what we said in September at the general debate. We need a new proposal, one that is both creative and persuasive, with a view to reaching a decision at the sixty-first session. Japan continues to believe that the Security Council must be reformed through an expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent categories to make it more representative, more efficient and more transparent, with enhanced effectiveness and legitimacy. That, we believe, is the view shared by an overwhelming majority of Member States, including many African countries.

Building on the past joint efforts of the G-4, its co-sponsors and other Member States, we are now actively considering concrete ideas that might provide a basis for discussion. We hope to be able to present them for wider consultation with all interested groups and individual countries in due course. We also encourage other groups and interested countries to come up with new ideas and proposals that could generate broader support among the membership. We hope that the next stage in the process of consultations will be one that is open, flexible and creative on all sides.

The time is ripe for us to bring the 15-year-long discussion on the Security Council to a conclusion. This year, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of Japan's membership in the United Nations, the Japanese delegation intends to spare no effort to ensure that the Security Council reform efforts will achieve concrete results during the current session. We look forward to working closely with all interested Member States and groups to that end.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for enabling us to start re-evaluating and re-discussing all the issues related to reform of the Security Council.

There is no doubt that the reform process should cover the Security Council. The Council should be more representative, and its working methods must be reviewed and adjusted to the needs of our time. It is also clear that the present models envisaged for an enlargement do not respond to the expectations and requirements of all Member countries. Let us not forget that the enlargement issue directly involves the national interests of almost every Member country.

Under those circumstances, in our view, there are only two options available to us: either we will insist on one of the existing models — which, I am afraid, will lead to an impasse — or we will review our national positions and look into new and different models, one of which may respond to our needs to a certain extent. So we are faced with a situation in which the best is the enemy of the good. We now have to decide whether we want to maintain our national positions in a maximalist manner or whether we are ready to negotiate and conclude a model that constitutes a common denominator for all, even if it is the lowest one. Turkey, for its part, is ready to actively take part in an exercise that, we hope, will lead to a reform to be adopted, if not by consensus, then by the consent of the overwhelming majority of Member States. I call upon all my colleagues to work to that end.

As for the working methods of the Security Council, we already have available to us a number of proposals — such as that of the group of five small nations — on which I think we can all work. Indeed, it would be far more desirable if we could achieve progress on both tracks of the reform process related to the Security Council. But if that turns out not to be possible, I feel that the lack of progress on one of the tracks should not hold hostage the progress on the other track.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): It is my great pleasure to speak on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation in the joint debate on two important agenda items relating to the report of the Security Council (A/61/2) and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. We wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, President of the Security Council, for his comprehensive introduction of the annual report of the Council.

My delegation wishes to align itself with the statement made earlier on these agenda items by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The overall world picture of peace and security in the past year continued to be a mixture not only of bright patterns, but also of quite a few dark spots, where prolonged armed conflicts, civil wars and terrorism still threatened the lives of millions of people and pushed many others into miserable conditions. As the principal United Nations organ having primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council has made a significant contribution to removing those dark spots from the picture.

Thanks to those efforts, the past year saw remarkable achievements such as the successful transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and the fair and mostly calm elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Burundi and Haiti. Nevertheless, the Security Council still has to work much harder to discharge its heavy responsibilities, as peace and stability are still regarded as something of a luxury to people in many areas of the world.

The Middle East is one case in point. Although the Council has been continuing to monitor the situation there closely, it is truly disheartening to see the escalation of violence in the region while the Council lives up to its high responsibilities. In this context, it should be noted, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in a July 2006 meeting of the Council on this subject, that a stable, long-term peace in the Middle East "requires the international community, through the Council, to speak with one voice".

Turning to the matter of Security Council reform, my delegation has always maintained that such reform is one of the most important issues in the process of reform of the United Nations as a whole, and no reform of the Council can be comprehensive in the absence of either of its two equally important elements — reform of its composition and reform of its working methods.

While all Member States agree that without the reform of the Security Council — the main United Nations body charged with one of its most important tasks, that of maintaining international peace and security — the reform of the Organization can in no way be completed. It is truly frustrating that we have not managed to make any headway towards this end.

Regarding the working methods of the Council, more positive changes have taken place with a view to enhancing efficiency and transparency. These include greater interaction with non-members of the Council, increased use of public meetings and strengthened coordination among the Presidents of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

We commend the efforts that have been undertaken by Council members, as well as their commitment to implement the admittedly modest measures contained in the July 2006 report of the Council's Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (S/2006/507, annex). We hope the Council will strengthen this momentum in order to meet the desire of all Member States to ensure genuine democracy, transparency and accountability in its work.

We also highly appreciate the contributions of Member States to improve the Council's working methods. In this regard, we wish to reiterate our commitment and readiness to continue consultations on the issues under consideration by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

As for structural reform of the Council, we are pleased to acknowledge that Member States have expressed their strong determination to keep the momentum going and their willingness for further discussions. For our part, we look forward to working with other delegations in order to arrive at a solution that enjoys the support of a broad majority of Member States. My delegation believes that Member States must redouble their efforts to overcome their differences in order to reach this target.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): On a number of occasions, many of us have quoted Secretary-General Kofi Annan's remark that without Security Council reform, United Nations reform will be incomplete. This still holds true. But if we want to summarize the progress that has been made since he made this remark, this Hall would be pretty silent. While silence is golden in many cases, in this case it is not.

Security Council reform has proven to be a very sensitive and difficult issue. There are many legitimate concerns that have to be addressed in the modalities of reform. On the other hand, there are concerns that are being raised, not for the sake of reform, but as a means to delay or dilute it. Two years ago, the G-4 was accused by some of undue and artificial haste. It was asserted that such a serious reform required an appropriate amount of time. Well, we are now over 20 months down the road without having achieved anything, and the lack of progress has even created a sense of frustration within the membership. This, in turn, translates into a general atmosphere of mistrust and creates controversy well beyond the Security Council in many forums of the system.

The growing polarization in matters concerning human rights and on issues relating to the Secretariat are but two examples taken from very different areas. Our position, therefore, is that we have to act without further delay. We would certainly be interested in hearing from those who called for more time 20 months ago as to whether they would agree that the moment for action has now arrived.

Let me now address the issue of effectiveness. We have often heard the argument, in particular by some permanent members, that enlargement of the Security Council would harm its effectiveness. Let us not confuse efficiency with effectiveness. The most efficient body, obviously, would be a very small body, unfettered by considerations of transparency and accountability. It would be a body consisting of only, let us say, five countries. That body, unburdened by rules of procedure, would be extremely efficient, but it would not be what we want. It would be efficient but not legitimate, and, therefore, not effective. It would take decisions that could not be implemented for want of legitimacy.

Right now, we are already witnessing erosion in the effectiveness of the Council, because more and more often, the Council and its decisions are perceived as not being sufficiently legitimate. This is also part of the reason why it is growing increasingly difficult to generate the resources needed for implementing ever-more demanding Council decisions.

An enlarged Security Council would have to be both effective and efficient. We believe this can be achieved in a Council with 25 members. Obviously, a lot depends on working methods, support of the Secretariat and the approach of the 25 members. NATO and the European Union show that it can work. Both organizations have recently gone through enlargement processes successfully. This was done for good political reasons and was supported by the respective members, who include a number of P-5 countries.

We continue to believe that the G-4 proposal is the most comprehensive, aiming both at structural reform of the Council and a thorough reform of its working methods. We are aware, however, that new ideas have recently emerged and that the call for an interim solution is gaining ground. We are prepared to discuss this and any other ideas with an open mind.

However, the aim of the exercise must remain at the centre of our reflection. The aim is to bring the Security Council into line with today's political realities, to give appropriate influence to the developing world as well as to the main contributors and enablers, to secure the participation of newly emerged countries or those that have regained their full political independence and to allow input from the membership at large.

We believe that ultimately, those aims can be achieved only by adding members which, thanks to their political weight and their status within the Security Council, can act as peers of the P5. Also, we understand the legitimate call in particular by the developing world not to be treated as second-class members in the Council. Outright, permanent and systematic refusal of permanent seats for developing countries — amounting, by the way, to well over half of the world's population — constitutes a discrimination we need to overcome. In discussing interim or transitional models, we should therefore bear in mind that the option for permanent seats must be kept open.

On working methods, we are in principle very supportive of the ideas developed by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five". However, we are doubtful whether those can and should be treated in isolation from structural reform.

We hope to see progress on that matter before the end of this session of the General Assembly. If we fail, the risk of a loss in reform momentum and of an eventual standstill is real. That would very likely have serious consequences for the United Nations as a whole at a time when it is needed more than ever. We would therefore call on all concerned to re-engage on Security Council reform with the aim of overcoming the present deadlock.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): At the outset, I, like others, would like to thank the President of the Security Council for the month of December for presenting the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. I will, however, limit my brief statement to the other agenda issue — the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

On 22 November in Geneva, Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a strong statement for the reform of the Security Council, saying, for example, that unless the Security Council is expanded, solutions to various issues will be more difficult or even not possible to reach. We have, as the President of the General Assembly stated this morning, to "be prepared to look at this matter with a fresh and open mind so that we can make substantial progress" (*A/61/PV.72*).

Through the discussions year after year in the Open-ended Working Group and elsewhere, everyone knows the fundamental arguments of most other Member States on the composition of the Security Council. Unfortunately, nothing new in that field has taken place for more than a year now and there is, as a result, in fact a certain loss of momentum to be felt. As my Japanese colleague stated here a few minutes ago, discussion on the expansion of the Council has stalemated. We do indeed need to move forward with open minds, as my Egyptian colleague described before our lunch break, along with my Czech colleague this afternoon and my German colleague just now.

The General Assembly has discussed reform of the Security Council for more than a decade without comprehensive agreement on reforms in sight. The 2005 High-Level Meeting expressly acknowledged that early reform of the Security Council was

> "an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations — in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*).

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has also repeatedly stated that no reform of the United Nations will be complete without the reform of the Security Council. Iceland concurs with his view, of course, as so many others have done today.

The position of Iceland on that matter has been placed on record several times. We have for many years advocated reform of the Security Council. The reform should, in our view, entail a comprehensive reform of the Security Council both in expansion and working methods. There should be an expansion in the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. We have hitherto supported the proposal of the Group of Four (G-4) that the membership of the Security Council be increased from 15 to 25 by adding six permanent and four non-permanent members, and we co-sponsored draft resolution A/59/L.64. I very much liked the exposé given by my German colleague just now on the relationship between effectiveness and legitimacy, and would like to align myself with those words.

Iceland has for many years advocated increased transparency in the work of the Security Council and welcomed the proposal of the so-called group of five small nations — the "Small Five". We are of the view that the proposal is in harmony with the working methods part of the G-4 proposal. We all want the Security Council to observe in its activities, approaches and procedures the key elements of transparency, openness and consistency, to paraphrase my Cuban colleague this morning when he spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and I would agree with my colleagues from Switzerland and Liechtenstein, who spoke earlier in this debate, that there is still a lot of room for improvement in the working methods of the Security Council.

Iceland attaches great importance to the work of the Security Council and has announced its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Council for the term 2009-2010. Iceland, a United Nations Member since 1946, has never before been a candidate for a seat on the Security Council. We believe that a comprehensive reform of the Security Council is essential if it is to represent today's global realities. We will continue to be actively engaged in seeking progress on that matter. Discussing the matter for another 10 years is not an option, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan also said in Geneva. He continued by saying:

> "We need to bring the Council's structure and membership in line with the realities of the twenty-first century, and not maintain agreements that cover geopolitical realities of 1945".

It is clear that compromises are needed to break the seemingly no-end-in-sight discussions. The goal must be to come as close to a consensus as possible through new consultations in which respect for each others' views is the guiding light. I am sure that Ambassador Kenzo Oshima said what many of us are thinking when he expressed the hope that the next stage in our consultations will be one that is not only open, but also flexible and creative on all sides.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Maintaining international peace and security is a solemn responsibility entrusted to the Security Council by States Members of the United Nations under the Charter. Over the past year, the Security Council has remained committed to addressing various regional and international hot spots and made vigorous efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, de-escalate tension in hot spot situations, maintain regional stability and assist the peacebuilding efforts of countries in post-conflict situations. A highly efficient and accountable Security Council is in the interests of all of us.

To better fulfil its responsibilities, the Security Council has consistently sought to improve its working methods and to increase transparency. During the process of recommending the new Secretary-General, the Security Council listened to the views of Member States with considerable attention and respect and undertook constructive arrangements to enhance communications with the General Assembly, which yielded good results. Needless to say, there is still much room for further improvement in the work of the Security Council. Together with all other delegations, China is ready and willing to continue to work hard to that end.

Since the holding of the World Summit last year, United Nations reform has made much headway in various areas. The Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund have been established. Resolutions on development, management reform, the revitalization of the General Assembly, the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy have been adopted. Consultations are now under way on mandate review and United Nations system-wide coherence.

One of the important lessons we can draw from those reforms is that, as United Nations reform involves the interests of all 192 Member States, it can make real progress only on the basis of full consultations and broad agreement. It therefore follows that for any reform result to have vitality and sustainability, it must be achieved through extensive consultations and consensus-building.

On Security Council reform, President Hu Jintao spelled out China's principled position at last year's Summit. I would like to take this opportunity to underline the following observations in connection with the current state of affairs.

First, China has consistently supported the Security Council in carrying out all necessary and reasonable reforms, so as to enhance its capacity to respond to new global threats and challenges. Security Council reform must be multifaceted, covering both the enlargement of its membership and the improvement of its working methods. Its reform should also aim at ensuring its authority and enhancing its efficiency.

Secondly, Security Council reform must take into consideration the interests and concerns of all parties, while giving priority to enhancing the representation of developing countries, especially African countries. Any reform formula that only addresses the concerns of a few big Powers, while disregarding the wishes of small and medium-sized countries, can hardly be accepted by the general membership of United Nations, and it will surely receive no support from China.

Thirdly, Security Council reform should be carried out on the basis of extensive consultations and avoid a hasty political showdown, which would be certain to divide, rather than unite, all Member States. China encourages all sides to draw from past experience and explore new ideas in an effort to narrow differences and reach the broadest possible consensus. That is the only correct approach that can assure the eventual success of the reform of the Security Council. In that regard, China supports the continuation of the work of the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

The intense and emotional discussions on the reform of the Security Council that took place at the United Nations over a year ago still remain fresh in our memories. The experience and lessons drawn from those discussions deserve our thorough consideration. At a time when progress has been made in other areas of United Nations reform, it is understandable that there are high expectations for the Security Council to speed up its reform. In order to achieve that objective, we need more than confidence and enthusiasm to promote progress. A flexible and pragmatic approach that takes into consideration the views of all sides is crucial. Without that it will be difficult to come up with a concrete formula that can bridge all the differences among Member States.

Security Council reform has now entered a new phase. All sides should go beyond their respective positions and consider, from a global perspective and in an open-minded and constructive manner, a way to achieve Security Council reform. A starting point could perhaps be to explore potential main benchmarks for a formula that is generally acceptable to all. Specifics could be worked out subsequently. There is an old Chinese proverb that says a melon is bound to fall from its stem once it is ripe. I am confident that as long as all sides demonstrate genuine political will, display a cooperative spirit for compromise and take a pragmatic approach, Security Council reform will eventually achieve a happy landing and end up with a solution satisfactory to all. China is ready and willing to continue to work with all other delegations to that end.

Mr. Wai (Myanmar): First of all, my delegation would like to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, President of the Security Council for December, for introducing the report of the Council covering the period from 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006 (A/61/2). The State of Qatar is well known for being firm on principle in the deliberations of the Security Council.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made at the 72nd meeting by the Permanent Representative of Cuba in his capacity as Chairperson of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In July of this year, the General Assembly convened a two-day debate on the subject of Security Council reform. The active participation of a large number of delegations in the debate clearly reflected the degree of importance that Member States attach to that issue. Although delegations differed widely on the modalities for reforming the Security Council, a general consensus emerged to the effect that there will be no meaningful reform of the United Nations without the reform of the Security Council itself.

Myanmar is in favour of the expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. An expanded Security Council must also reflect today's political and economic realities. However, the fact that we have not made substantial progress on the expansion of the Council demonstrates the sensitive and complex nature of the issue. It is extremely important that this issue does not become a divisive factor among the membership of the United Nations. Dialogue and consultations must continue in order to arrive at a solution acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the membership.

Expansion alone is not enough. We see the need for the Security Council to further improve its working methods and decision-making process, to make it more transparent and democratic. Some of the initiatives taken by the Security Council in recent years are welcome steps. On the other hand, my delegation is greatly concerned by the increased encroachment of the Security Council on the functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. States Members of the United Nations, and in particular the 118-member Non-Aligned Movement, have expressed their growing concern about that encroachment.

Their concern is clearly reflected in the Final Document of the Fourteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) held in September 2006 in Havana. Allow me to quote the relevant portion of that document.

> "The Heads of State or Government underscored the need for [United Nations] Member States to fully respect the functions and powers of each principal organ of the [United Nations], in particular the General Assembly, and to maintain the balance among these organs with their respective Charter-based functions and powers. They stressed that the Security Council must fully observe all Charter provisions, as well as all General Assembly resolutions, which clarify its relationship with the latter organ and other principal organs. In this context, they affirmed that Article 24 of the Charter does not necessarily provide the Security Council with the competence to address issues which fall within the functions and powers of the General Assembly and the [Economic and Social Council], including in the areas of norm-setting, legislation and establishing definitions, bearing in mind that the Assembly is primarily tasked with the progressive development of international law and its codification. They cautioned about the danger of encroachment by the Council on issues which clearly fall within the functions and powers of other principal organs of the [United Nations] and their subsidiary bodies." (*A/61/472, annex I, para. 40*)

One vivid example of encroachment by the Security Council concerns my own country. Urged on by a most powerful permanent member, and despite strong opposition from a number of Council members, the Security Council unjustly placed the situation of Myanmar on its agenda by alleging that it poses a threat to international peace and security. Nothing could be further from the truth. Myanmar has done nothing that can undermine the peace and security of any country, let alone regional or international peace and security. Myanmar has close and cordial relations with all of her five neighbours and other countries in the region and beyond. Myanmar's neighbours, as well as the NAM, have taken a position that they do not consider the situation in Myanmar as a threat to international peace and security and oppose attempts by a permanent member of the Security Council to categorize Myanmar as such.

The founders of the United Nations did not intend the world body to become a forum where some members with political and economic clout could gang up against a Member State and label it for what is not. We therefore urge Member States to resist attempts by those powerful States to influence the Security Council to take action against a Member State which in no way poses any threat to international peace and security.

In this context, allow me to call the Assembly's attention to the fact that, at the Fourteenth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, the heads of State or Government of the Movement called upon the Security Council to uphold the primacy of and respect for the Charter in connection with its functions and powers and stressed once again that the decision by the Security Council to initiate formal or informal discussions on a situation in any Member State of the United Nations or any issue that does not constitute a threat to international peace and security is contrary to Article 24 of the Charter.

My delegation fully shares the NAM view that transparency, openness and consistency are key elements that the Security Council should observe in all its activities, approaches and procedures. My delegation also supports the NAM position that the Security Council must comply with the provisions of Article 31 of the Charter, which allow any non-Council member to participate in discussions on matters directly affecting it.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm our position that any expansion or enlargement of the Security Council should reflect the reality of the world today. We envisage the developing countries taking a greater role in an expanded Security Council. Myanmar is committed to supporting reform of the United Nations as a whole, which includes reform of the Security Council.

Mr. Tarrago (Brazil): On behalf of the Brazilian delegation, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this timely plenary meeting on the long-standing issue of increase in the membership of the Security Council. Progress on this fundamental question is key to the successful completion of the institutional reform of this Organization.

A world still marked by war and violence requires a Security Council that can effectively respond to the contemporary challenges regarding international peace and security and the observance of international law. Since the Council is called upon today to play a role in a wider array of issues, its reform becomes more urgent than ever.

The need for effective collective measures to re-establish confidence and settle international disputes is all the more evident as regional tensions continue to escalate, conflicts continue to be a daily reality and civilian populations continue to suffer mounting casualties. Recent events in various regions of the world highlight the narrow power and representation base of the Security Council. This risks further eroding the authority, legitimacy and ability of the United Nations to respond adequately to such situations.

We welcome the progress made with respect to United Nations reform that resulted in the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, in a follow-up to the outcome of the summits on development issues and in the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, among other things.

The latest debate on Security Council reform, held on 20 and 21 July 2006, underlined that the pressing need for change is now a notion held nearly unanimously by United Nations members. It showed a clear majority of views on what a reformed Council should look like. Many delegations underscored the need for the participation of developing countries in both categories, as well as for changes in the Council's working methods. None expressed support for maintaining the status quo. The time has thus come to advance towards a process of dialogue and consultations, with a view to arriving at an early decision on this question.

The most important issues regarding Security Council reform are, undoubtedly, membership and representation. This does not mean denying the importance of a comprehensive reform that includes adaptation of working methods and the problem of encroachment by the Council on powers and functions of the other main United Nations organs. But unless the question of membership is addressed, imbalances in representation and the consequent impact on the issue of legitimacy will continue to gradually erode the Council's effectiveness and credibility.

Meaningful reform must result in a Security Council that is more democratic and representative, with new members in its permanent and non-permanent categories. Reform that corrects the historical imbalance in the composition of the Council — which today excludes entire regions of the developing world from the permanent member category — is not only a just aspiration; it is a political necessity.

We wish to continue to work closely with all those who have expressed a genuine interest in Security Council reform, so as to complete the process and bring to fruition the mandate that our heads of State presented to us in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). Movement in the right direction would imply agreement on expansion, with developed and developing countries from various regions in both categories. Brazil has been working on all fronts of the United Nations reform process, consistently assisting in the formulation of the positions and views of developing countries.

In 1965, under pressure from a growing membership, the United Nations agreed to an amendment to its Charter that allowed for the addition of four new members to the Security Council. That progress was possible only as a result of strenuous efforts by several newly independent States that insisted on upholding their right to be heard. After more than 40 years and a substantial enlargement of the United Nations membership, the Security Council needs an overhaul to reflect current realities. We still have the opportunity to effectively reform the Organization in a manner that establishes a more just, fairer and more equitable structure for cooperation and helps to counter the disturbing trend towards the weakening of collective security and of multilateralism as a whole.

At the first Africa-South America Summit, which took place in Abuja on 30 November 2006, the heads of State or Government of Africa and South America sent a clear message. In the Abuja Declaration, they stressed the importance of promoting the democratization of the international decision-making bodies to improve the participation of developing countries in the multilateral system. The leaders of these two regions of the developing world also called for urgent reform of the Security Council — an essential element of the overall effort to reform the United Nations — and supported its enlargement in order to make it more broadly representative of the developing countries, efficient and transparent, and thus to further enhance its effectiveness and legitimacy and the implementation of its decisions.

Brazil is encouraged by the fact that the Group of Four proposal remains the one that has garnered the largest support base. We will continue to work with our partners, fellow sponsors and other like-minded delegations to build on the core elements of that platform, while keeping an open mind to views recently expressed, including during this debate. Our aim is to incorporate constructive and creative ideas in preparing a text for adoption at the current session of the General Assembly.

The membership of the Organization must face up to the challenge of comprehensive United Nations reform, in the knowledge that no reform would be complete without Security Council expansion.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): There can be no complete United Nations reform without reform of the Security Council. However, since the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform was created, progress has been slow. Many of us are getting a little frustrated, impatient and weary. Hence, we should do everything we can to find an acceptable solution to this crucial reform question.

The primary aim of this whole exercise is to make the Security Council more effective by making it more representative, transparent and democratic. In this endeavour, most Member States have focused on the issues of expanding the Council's membership and improving its working methods and decision-making processes.

Like the majority of United Nations Member States, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is in favour of an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members from developed and developing countries, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution and taking into account the relative importance of various countries. Furthermore, we would like to stress that reform should also include measures that would make the Security Council more transparent in its working methods, especially in its decision-making processes. We believe that such transparency would not only boost the confidence of Member States, but also enable all of us to better understand the merits of the Council's decisions and to fully support them.

Africa is a great continent that deserves the support of us all. However, Africa has no representation in the permanent membership of the Security Council in its current form. In this exercise, all efforts should therefore be made to correct and put an end to that glaring injustice. The Lao delegation will support every endeavour to that end.

The world of today is experiencing complex and rapidly changing developments. Since 1945, great changes have occurred. The Security Council, the main body in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security, should adapt to those new changes and realities. The Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that, with tireless efforts and in a spirit of compromise, we should work together to reform the Security Council in order to make that body more effective and legitimate.

Mr. Wallace (United States of America): The United States is committed to a strong and vibrant United Nations. We have been consistent and strong advocates of United Nations reform as a means to enable the Organization to confront successfully the many challenges of the twenty-first century.

At the beginning of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, our heads of State called for an ambitious effort to modernize the United Nations through significant management and governance reforms, expansion of the Security Council and the establishment of a Human Rights Council and a Peacebuilding Commission. Our collective reform effort to date has so far yielded only modest results. Our limited success to date should serve as a reminder that reform does not inherently engender improvement unless it is done right and is fully completed.

That maxim holds true for Security Council expansion. We believe that it is necessary to modernize the Security Council, and we support a modest expansion. Membership in the United Nations has grown from 51 in 1945 to 192 today. The balance of power has shifted since 1945. Non-State actors and transnational threats, such as terrorism and failed States, increasingly threaten international peace and security. We believe that it is appropriate for the Council to change to meet these new realities.

Council expansion should be designed to increase its effectiveness to respond to these challenges. Any expansion must first ensure that the Council's ability to respond with agility, credibility and efficacy to threats to international peace and security is preserved. One reason why the Council is able to function efficiently is that its size permits useful and manageable discussion and debate. Expansion to a larger membership must not undermine efficiency in reaching consensus in the Council.

Proposals to expand the Council presented during the previous two sessions of the General Assembly envisioned a large expansion that could endanger the Council's efficiency. Those proposals did not achieve the broad-based consensus necessary for eventual adoption as a Charter amendment. We must search for new and more measured ways of looking at the issues that are capable of achieving wide support. That is why we favour a more modest expansion of the Council.

With regard to permanent membership in the Council, we believe that new permanent members must be supremely qualified to undertake the tremendous duties and responsibilities that they will assume. In our view, qualified nations should meet criteria in the following areas: size of economy and population; military capacity; financial and/or peacekeeping contributions to the United Nations; commitment to democracy and human rights; strong records on non-proliferation; and equitable geographic balance. We continue to support Japan — which by all accounts has proved its qualifications — for permanent membership on the Council.

As we continue this debate on the expansion of the Security Council, let us remember the bold vision of the signers of the Charter and achieve an expansion that will truly help the Council to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations in discharging its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

In conclusion, let me express our thanks to the President of the Security Council for the month of December, Ambassador Al-Nasser of Qatar, for his remarks introducing the Council's annual report to this body (A/61/2). The report is a comprehensive review of the very intensive work of the Council in the year ending 31 July.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): Our debates on the Security Council are often tinged with tension and frustration. Non-Council members lament their exclusion from decision-making and the opacity of the Council. Council members feel hectored and under-appreciated for the significant responsibilities that they take on. We are not communicating as we should. We need to break out of this cycle and to try to understand and address each others' concerns in a realistic way.

I would like the proposals of the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — on working methods to be seen in this light. The S-5 proposals are not meant to badger or shame. They are based on a genuine desire to improve the Council's working methods. We feel that our suggestions will help Member States to interact with the Council and properly implement Council decisions. This will only strengthen the Council's legitimacy and effectiveness.

An Australian Minister of the Navy, N. J. O. Makin, was the President of the Council during its first meeting, held in London's Church House on 17 January 1946. He said,

> "I would stress ... that the calling together of the Security Council will not by itself establish peace. The maintenance of peace requires the cooperation of all Members of the United Nations."

The key words are "cooperation of all Members of the United Nations". The Council and the Assembly can work together, and must do so if we are to achieve our goals.

Although the S-5 draft resolution has been in existence for nine months now, we have not had an opportunity to discuss the issues with the Council as a whole. That said, it is unfair to accuse the Council of non-responsiveness. For example, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions has responded to calls for more inclusiveness, accountability and transparency by coming up with a list of recommendations. Some are similar to the S-5 proposals. We are grateful to the Council and, in particular, to Japan, for taking this initiative. We also thank Japan for chairing the Working Group. We hope that the Working Group will continue its work and that it will enjoy the benefits of having a long-term Chairman as committed as Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan.

The Working Group's recommendations were made in July. We hope that the intervening six months have given the Council enough time to digest and implement its own suggestions. As the saying goes, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating". Implementation is crucial.

In addition, there are a number of S-5 ideas that remain unaddressed. For example, we would still like to have more analytical reports submitted to the Assembly. I am sorry to say that the most recent Council report hardly meets that definition. We note that informal briefings by the presidency of the Security Council were started again last week. Credit goes to Qatar for reinvigorating that practice. But the implementation of this has always been a bit capricious. That is, perhaps, a function of having provisional rules of procedure for 60 years. All of this relates to the broader points of accountability and transparency. We also continue to have concerns about procedures relating to sanctions lists. We do not disagree with the concept of lists. However, due process and review procedures should also feature.

I will not go into detail about the issue of expansion. Singapore's views are well known. We support expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories so as to better reflect current geopolitical realities. In this regard, we have expressed support on previous occasions for the Group of Four (G-4) proposal, which includes developed and developing countries. We do not support the extension of veto powers to new permanent members. Increasing the number of vetoes in the Security Council will complicate decision-making and undermine the Council's credibility and effectiveness. We remain wary of intermediate steps that might ensconce a few countries semi-permanently in the Council and possibly result in the exclusion of small States.

I am aware that some prefer to conflate working methods with expansion. In an ideal world, that makes sense. But the reality is that expansion remains contentious. None of the current ideas have come close to generating the support required to pass a Charter amendment. By comparison, working methods reform can be effected more quickly. It may be more feasible to pursue parallel tracks.

Albert Einstein once said that common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by age 18. Who am I to disagree with Einstein? But I hope that, rather than a collection of prejudices, common sense is simply the recognition of what it is realistic and right to do. In the view of the S-5, reforming the Security Council's working methods is a worthwhile endeavour that will only help all sides, including the Assembly and the Council, in the long run. The S-5 looks forward to continuing to work with the Security Council and Member States on the reform of the Security Council's working methods.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): Let me start by thanking the President of the Security Council for December, Ambassador Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, for introducing the annual report of the Security Council (A/61/2). I would also like to commend the Secretariat for its efforts in producing the report.

I would like to make a statement in my national capacity on agenda item 111, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Finland strongly supports the reform and enlargement of the Security Council. We must take every opportunity to make the United Nations more effective and more legitimate. The Security Council should reflect the aspirations of the entire membership. The reform of the Security Council is an important part of that process. We must make sure that the Council is truly efficient in carrying out its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

For most countries, membership of the Security Council is a rare and limited opportunity. However, all Member States of the United Nations are required to implement the decisions of the Security Council, and are directly affected by the actions of the Council. Therefore, closer cooperation between the Security Council and the membership at large is essential.

Finland supports the enlargement of the Council in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members. However, for the Security Council to be effective, the right of the veto should not be extended to new permanent members under any circumstances. Finland also strongly supports the reform of the Council's working methods and procedures, so as to make it more transparent, inclusive and legitimate.

In conclusion, I would like to express our support for the aspirations of countries such as Japan, Germany, India and Brazil to be elected permanent members of an enlarged Security Council. We also support making the Council more representative by also including representatives of developing countries from the southern hemisphere and Africa.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin, like representatives who have taken the floor before me, by expressing my deep gratitude for the personal interest and commitment demonstrated by the President since she assumed her post to ensure that the process of Security Council reform makes significant progress during her mandate. I should also like to reiterate my gratitude to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar, for the seriousness, skill and dexterity with which he is guiding the work of the Security Council this month, and especially for the very detailed, original and relevant nature of his opening statement to the Assembly. I also wish to take this opportunity to convey my sincere congratulations and encouragement to all the new non-permanent members of the Security Council, who we are certain will, like their predecessors, continue sustained efforts to improve transparency in the Council, thereby increasing support for its decisions.

As in previous years, the General Assembly is meeting today to take up the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/61/2) along with the agenda item pertaining to the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered this morning by the Permanent Representative of Cuba in his capacity as Chairperson of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Having read the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, my delegation is fully convinced that there is no doubt that the problems raised in previous years continue to be relevant. It is quite unfortunate that the report was published so late, making it impossible for us to study it as we would have wished.

Having said that, my delegation believes that, in accordance with the provisions of Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council must account for its actions before the General Assembly, which is the organ of the United Nations that best reflects the universal and democratic nature of the Organization. The General Assembly has a very important role in the running and general direction of the United Nations. In accordance with Article 10, it has a mandate to discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the Charter. We therefore believe that the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly must be more factual, thorough and analytical. It should, in particular, contain an assessment of the efforts and effectiveness of the Council.

My delegation would strongly urge the Security Council to adopt new measures. They could include, for example, the preparation of reports containing critical assessments of its work and performance and the issuance of a compendium setting out significant improvements made or under way.

We urge both permanent and non-permanent members of the Council to avail themselves of this forum to put forth constructive ideas regarding the Council's internal dysfunction and on the best way to carry out the mandate entrusted to it by the Charter. While it is true that substantial progress has been made in the Security Council, especially in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, we must now build upon those achievements while also expanding consultations with all Member States.

As set out in the Ezulwini Consensus, whose general contents were reaffirmed in the Sirte Declaration of the African Union and, more recently, during the Union's Summit, held in July 2006 at Banjul, the Gambia, Senegal will continue to resolutely assert that, in the context of the enlargement of the Council, the election of new members of the Security Council should be considered from the following perspective.

First, we must immediately correct the injustice done to Africa by giving it a permanent seat on the Council, before any further consideration of the reform of the Council. Africa, a continent that is home to 53 United Nations Member States, is currently deprived of permanent representation on the Council. That is a paradoxical situation, given that nearly 70 per cent of the issues dealt with by the Council clearly concern African problems.

It is today inconceivable to discuss African problems in the Council and adopt and implement measures and decisions without Africa being represented by at least one permanent member. It can in fact be said that this situation is a historical error that must be rectified as soon as possible as part of a fair and equitable enlargement of the Council that results in granting Africa two permanent seats, with the same privileges and prerogatives as current permanent members, as well as five non-permanent seats.

That is the only just and realistic approach, for it acknowledges that the status of permanent membership cannot be denied to African States. African countries ask only to be allowed to contribute to the strengthening of the foundations of the United Nations and to the promotion of the Organization's ideals of peace, justice and progress for all peoples.

Although we respect the legitimate positions of other members and interest groups, and on the basis of the principle to which I have referred, we cannot at all countenance the proposal to expand the membership of the Council only in the non-permanent category. We are prepared to dispassionately consider other ideas and suggestions, as well as to demonstrate realism and flexibility, but without abandoning our duty to the principle of African solidarity and the need for justice for all.

The reform of the Security Council is within our grasp, despite the current deep-seated differences. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan has often said, the reform of the Security Council is still feasible so long as Member States have the political will to see it through.

My delegation believes that last April's submission of the final observations by the Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group with regard to the main points of the debate concerning Security Council reform in general (see A/61/47, annex II), which reflected comments and opinions from a wide range of regional and subregional groups as well as other interest groups at the United Nations, was an important step that clearly illustrated the collective commitment of most Member States to foster the conditions necessary to continue and to expand the consideration of the issues at stake and to reach satisfactory results for all.

However, we must recognize that, despite those praiseworthy and courageous specific initiatives, the prospects for a comprehensive and thorough reform of the Security Council to make it a modern, democratic, transparent and effective body are still to be realized.

Thus, a large number of questions remain unanswered, dealing in particular with the enlargement of the Security Council in the two membership categories, the composition of the Council, the use of the right of veto, the conditions to be met by candidates for permanent membership, relations among the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, the improvement of the Council's working methods, as advocated by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — and the overwhelming majority of other members, as well as the question of periodic review.

In the course of our debates, delegations and some regional or interest groups have put forward relevant suggestions to improve the Council's working methods, which are designed to ensure, if adopted, greater transparency, effectiveness and legitimacy for this central organ of the United Nations system.

As I emphasized earlier, efforts have been made in this direction and should be continued. However, for my delegation, the fundamental issue of enlargement cannot obscure the equally important issue of improving the Council's working methods. Regarding this question of the relationship between the enlargement of the Council and the improvement of its working methods, we would like to see an integrated and comprehensive method.

We welcome the efforts made by the African Group in relation to other regional or interest groups, including the Group of Four, with a view to creating synergy within the discussion on Security Council reform, and we encourage all actors to continue in this direction.

Security Council reform is a delicate process requiring Member States to make considerable efforts, to show imagination and make bold and innovative initiatives. It is along those lines that I would like to appeal to Member States to overcome without delay the impasse in which this difficult exercise of reforming the Security Council finds itself. Through a spirit of openness and flexibility which we must all demonstrate, we would then give the President of the General Assembly the means to complete the work of reform that we have undertaken together over the past two years.

I can assure her now of the complete readiness of my delegation to provide her with all the support necessary for this purpose, with a view to seeing a renewed Security Council which is more democratic, more transparent and more capable of responding to the numerous challenges of our time.

Mr. Berruga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its satisfaction at the convening of this meeting on Security Council reform. Above all, we welcome the invitation made by the President of the General Assembly to take a fresh look and to try to inject a bit of oxygen into a debate that has been going on for more than 10 years.

One of the reasons why, over those 10 years, we have not made progress is that we have been discussing the reform policy and not the reform itself. I believe that that is an important distinction that must be acknowledged. We have been discussing regional balances, the aspirations of a few Powers, a revision of the balance of power, equitability, accountability — phrases which have been dealt with extensively this morning and afternoon. Thus, we have discussed the policy of reform but not the reform itself.

In that sense, we have not had a genuine dialogue. Rather, we have had monologues, we have had speeches — my speech, by a conservative estimate, will be approximately the eight-hundredth on this topic. These monologues have shown something very important: that we cannot move forward on reform. We do not have genuine exchanges of views. I believe that the time has come to begin direct negotiations among all the interested parties on the various aspects of reform to see what problems the Security Council has and, on the basis of that, to try to seek a reform that would address those problems.

The guide, inevitably, has to be what constitutes the ideal system, the best system possible for collective security on which we should work. Here, we have no margin of error. The fundamental essence of the United Nations is that we do a good job in the area of peace and security. If we fail in this task, undoubtedly we are going to put our Organization in a serious predicament. That is something that we cannot accept. I do not think that any of the 192 States Members of the United Nations can accept that.

The question would therefore be how to move forward in this reform process. I believe that we have to put forward two basic questions. First of all, if the models that have been presented to us — A or B, or any other model that we have seen up to now during the past 12 years — have not made progress or have not created a broad consensus among Members, what then should be the perspective to guide this reform process?

It seems to us that the fundamental questions that need to be addressed in order to make progress are, first of all, what are the weaknesses of the Security Council that we observe and that we have to remedy? That is a question that we have to deal with urgently.

The second question, of course, is how to establish this collective security system in which we obtain, as provided for under Article 24 of the Charter, a more flexible and effective organ which would respond effectively to old and new challenges and threats. As we have said many times in this Hall, we have to update the Security Council after 61 years. What has changed are the challenges; what has not changed is the way we address those challenges on behalf of all Members.

In order to change the architecture of the Security Council, we first have to have a collective diagnosis of the type of threats that confront us and the concepts we are going to use to fight these threats. It would be very sad if we were to create a new building for the Security Council and afterwards, after having built it, realize that it is not relevant for the challenges and threats that we are facing today.

It is necessary to come up with the concept and then the architecture that we would like to build. My delegation believes that we have six challenges in order to move forward in Security Council reform. The first is how to balance a better representation in the Council without sacrificing its effectiveness. I believe that that issue is behind a great number of statements made this morning and afternoon. It is hard to achieve greater representation and more legitimacy in the decisions taken by the Council without losing effectiveness. I believe that that is the first, and perhaps the most important, challenge that we have had to deal with. Historically, as we have seen from the reform of 1963, there has been a ratio of four States Members of the United Nations to each member of the Security Council. I would simply mention that as a reference.

The second challenge we have before us to promote reform is to make sure that the function of the

Council would be the element that determines its size and working methods.

Our third challenge is to make sure that the Security Council's structure is flexible enough and capable of evolving over time. It is not impossible that if we manage to come up with a reform under any model today, in 20 years we may very well find ourselves confronted again with the same type of inquiry. We have to inject some sort of evolutionary gene into the collective security system so that this very important organ can automatically adapt to the world's changing challenges and needs.

The fourth important challenge where there seems to be growing consensus relates to the need for the Security Council to strengthen its system of accountability. That is a fundamental issue, and I believe that, especially as regards membership on the Council, there is a serious lack of accountability. But election through a periodic democratic process is a further incentive for States, whether they espouse a parliamentary system or any other form of democracy, to renew their mandate through the ballot box. There has to be such communication, through accountability, between the electorate and those who hold power.

The fifth challenge to which my delegation would like to refer relates to an issue that has already been mentioned briefly this morning: how important it is that the Council not dismiss out of hand the work that has to be done under Chapter VI. In other words, I do not believe that the reflexive manner in which the Council is increasingly invoking Chapter VII serves it well in its work. We must further explore the question of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Finally, given the exponential growth of peacekeeping missions, the Security Council must establish a clear link between the means at our disposal and the objectives that we are pursuing. The current situation is bordering on critical, since we do not have the means to enable us to deal with the various crises that the Council has taken on.

In conclusion, Mexico would like to reaffirm its commitment to working in this area. We cannot delay this any longer. Twelve years is more than enough time to become familiar with the position of every State Member of the United Nations. Now is the time to begin negotiations that can make it possible for us to make effective progress — and it must be effective — in reforming the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

74th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 December 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa .... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 111 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/61/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Abani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): It is a very great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Group of African States concerning the agenda items being considered in this debate. In that regard, I should like to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar, for presenting the report of the Security Council (A/61/2). The African Group would also like to thank the Open-ended Working Group for its report on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters (A/60/47).

We recognize that a significant part of the Council's work concerns Africa, the continent predisposed to conflict, and we commend the members of that body for their remarkable work. However, the belated publication of these reports has not permitted us to consider it in detail. Therefore, my comments can be of only a general nature. The African Group reserves the right to make its views widely known at the appropriate time on this issue, one that is important for the only region not to have a permanent Council member.

Through the 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1), our heads of State and Government undertook a firm commitment to work to strengthen the United Nations, in particular with a view to reforming its principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security: the Security Council. For the African Group, Council reform is a major issue requiring much commitment on the part of everyone in order to make progress and adapt our Organization in the process of the reforms that we have begun.

The African Group would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its position on this issue. That position was expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus and confirmed in the Syrte Declaration and is based on the following principles. First, reform must be an integral part of the comprehensive reform process under way in the United Nations. Secondly, these reforms, if they are to be effective, must put an end to the historic wrong done to certain regions. They must move towards greater legitimacy by necessarily increasing the membership in both categories, as well as by improving its methods of work. This would mean greater transparency, which could only serve the cause of maintaining of international peace and security.

Lastly, for us, the selection of African representatives must also be carried out in accordance with the criteria that the African Union itself will define. The African Group, while remaining open to constructive dialogue with all interested structures, reaffirms that Security Council reform must be carried

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out in a democratic manner, so that it can take into account the aspirations of each and every one of us.

On that basis, the African Group wishes to see that this historical imbalance, whereby Africa is the only continent that is not represented in the Security Council, be rectified. That is why the Ezulwini Consensus, which represents the joint African position, consists of two permanent seats with all the prerogatives related thereto, including the right of veto; and five non-permanent seats, which implies two additional seats in relation to the current situation.

It is this position, which was transmitted to the Assembly in draft resolution A/60/L.41, that the African Group believes would reflect democracy and take into account the current trend in the world.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to participate in this joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111. We join others in thanking Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for the month of December, for his presentation of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, as contained in document A/61/2.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement made by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council for 2007 and 2008 — Belgium, Indonesia, Italy, Panama and South Africa. We hope that they will bring fresh impetus to the work of the Council.

We consider this annual report by the Security Council to the General Assembly to be important. It not only fulfils the relevant requirements of the Charter but, more importantly, fulfils the Council's obligation to the larger membership represented in the Assembly. The report enables the entire membership of the United Nations to follow the Council's work. The Assembly's consideration of the report will hopefully provide useful feedback to the Council on its performance.

The Security Council's annual report is an important element in the Charter relationship between these two major organs. Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter require that the Council submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the Assembly for its consideration. This clearly points to the need for the Council to be accountable to the larger membership. In this connection, the General Assembly should have the opportunity to assess and judge the performance of the Council over the past year. In turn, Council members should have the opportunity to pay careful attention to the concerns, observations and comments of the larger membership.

My delegation hopes that the comments and suggestions made in the General Assembly will receive appropriate consideration by Council members in the discharge of their responsibilities on behalf of all of us in the maintenance of international peace and security. For the larger membership to be able to provide its comments, Member States need time to prepare for this debate. We regret that the report was approved by the Council only last Wednesday and was subsequently published as an official document late last week, thus giving Member States very little time to study it and provide comprehensive comments. We regret that this has happened again, this year. We urge the Council to provide the report much earlier in the future.

We note the improvement in the Council's methods of work. However, the report continues to lack a substantive and analytical account of the Council's work. The incorporation of more details and analyses, beyond a factual account of the work, could certainly help the wider membership of the United Nations to appreciate the circumstances that influenced the Council's decisions on a particular issue. This would enable a greater appreciation of the achievements made or difficulties faced by the Council on questions under its consideration. It would allow non-Council members to offer suggestions on possible measures to further improve the Council's work.

My delegation notes that the Council addressed a wide range of issues during the period under review and that its workload has continued to increase steadily. A total of 250 meetings were held, 81 resolutions adopted and 65 presidential statements issued. Conflict and instability in Africa continue to dominate the work of the Council.

The holding of thematic debates is useful in improving the effectiveness of the Council. The exchange of views between non-Council and Council members in these thematic debates on issues relating to international peace and security allows for the development of appropriate strategies that are more holistic and integrated, involving all the major organs of the United Nations. Nevertheless, such an exercise as carried out by the Security Council should not venture into areas that rightly fall under the responsibility of the other major organs of the United Nations. Given the Council's increasing workload, it might be helpful if thematic debates are kept to a minimum in any particular year. They should not be held just for the sake of having discussions, but rather with a view to achieving concrete results. That would have an impact on the performance not only of the Council but also on the United Nations at large.

My delegation welcomes the Council's continued consideration of the questions of Palestine and the Middle East through its monthly briefings and open debates. However, they have not had a significant impact on the situation on the ground. Violence continues unabated, while death and destruction continue to mount, particularly on the Palestinian side. We wonder why this is happening, even when the Council is continuously seized of the matter. The Council must maintain and improve its credibility by enforcing its authority on these questions. It must discharge its responsibilities in the maintenance of peace and security. It must resist any party's manipulating the Council and preventing it from taking action that would end conflict, restore peace and security and prevent further loss of life.

Turning to agenda item 111, my delegation wishes to state that we agree with the prevailing view that the Security Council needs to be reformed in a comprehensive manner, in terms of both its working methods and the expansion of its membership, to make it more legitimate, inclusive, representative and transparent. The position of Member States on this issue is well known to all. However, we are dismayed by the lack of political will and the selectivity shown in addressing various aspects of the reform. There appears to be a push in some areas and disinterest in others, particularly that concerning the Security Council.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its position that reform should also address the question of the veto, with a view to eventually doing away with it, in conformity with the principle of sovereign equality, as envisaged in the Charter. The veto privilege remains the chief cause for the undermined credibility of the United Nations and its ability to function as a democratic institution. If one values the rule of law over traditional power and politics, then genuine democratic principles must prevail.

Many proposals and formulations have been put forth to address the use of the veto. Malaysia continues to hold the position that the exercise of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council should be regulated so as to prevent abuse by its holders to unjustly overrule the wishes of the majority. Malaysia has previously suggested that until this objective of abolishing the veto is achieved, a modified veto, whereby two permanent members with veto power, backed by three other members of the Council, would be needed to block any Council resolution.

Another important element that needs to be urgently addressed in improving the working methods of the Security Council is the issue of encroachment on the work of the General Assembly. We have seen over the years that the Council addresses issues that do not fall under its purview. Rather than encroaching upon the jurisdiction of the General Assembly, it would be better if the Security Council looked at ways to ensure that the views of the larger membership are taken into account in its drafting and decision-making processes.

With regard to the question of the enlargement of the Security Council, Malaysia fully supports expansion in both categories, based on geographical balance and reflecting the geopolitics of today. We reiterate our position that if there is no agreement on expansion in the permanent membership, we should proceed on expansion in the non-permanent category, while keeping the issue of expansion of the permanent membership active.

My delegation feels that it is time for us to move forward and for Member States to demonstrate their political will in reforming the Security Council. Any reform is for the betterment of the Organization and should not be seen as taking the side of any one or more groups.

Before I conclude, allow me to express our continued support to the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. My delegation believes that discussion on Security Council reform should continue through this Working Group.

Madam President, Malaysia will continue to support and work closely with you, with other States Members and with the Secretary-General to explore new ideas with a view to reforming the Security Council.

Mr. Yousfi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statements made by Niger on behalf of the African Group and by Cuba on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Algeria finds it wise to hold this joint debate because the two questions under discussion are very closely connected. In fact, the practice of the Council — which unfortunately is not reflected or is insufficiently reflected in its reports to the General Assembly — represents an important parameter for evaluating the nature and the depth of the reform that we would like to see in the functioning of this body, which is strategic for the work of the Organization.

The shortcomings that hinder the way the Council carries out its mandate, which were highlighted during the annual debate on its report, show very clearly that it might be an illusion to believe that a substantial change can be made in its practice, given its current membership and its working and decision-making procedures. Seen from this perspective, the report of the Council to the Assembly represents proof of the Council's inability to evolve in the direction that the majority of Member States would like.

In other words, like previous reports, the one submitted to us today bears the signs of the same problems that we have consistently deplored. Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, has presented a long list of these problems. Indeed, both in terms of its form and its content, the report does not enable the General Assembly to carry out a serious and complete analysis of the Council's work during the period in question. The trend to reduce this discussion to a mere ritual is confirmed year after year. In every case, the report is far from meeting the political and legal requirements stemming from the accountability obligation that is incumbent on the Security Council, in accordance with the relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The ambiguities that characterize relations between the Council and the General Assembly are not the issue here. Clearly there is a desire to prevent the Assembly from exercising its right to examine the functioning of the Council, which is provided under the Charter. Moreover, Member States that criticize the Council's work cannot be reproached for a lack of proposals to remedy certain shortcomings. It is a fact that the majority of the innovations made in the working procedures of the Council, reflected in greater accessibility for non-member countries and an improvement in the transparency of the work, were promoted by the General Assembly Working Group on the reform of the Council.

Moreover, thanks to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/241, the summaries of the discussions on these items by the Presidents of the General Assembly contain very relevant proposals. It must be admitted that we are facing resistance on the part of permanent members, in particular against putting into effect these numerous proposals, including the updating and definitive adoption of the rules of procedure of the Council and limiting the use of the veto only to questions that represent a real threat to peace and therefore come under Chapter VII of the Charter.

In this context, I would like to make a few comments that I think could help to curb the Council's propensity to infringe particularly on the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and to refocus its work on the mandate of the with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this respect, it would be appropriate for the members of the Council — and this remark is also addressed to non-permanent members — to resist every attempt to confer upon the Council a standard-setting role, whether of a political or a legal nature. The Security Council has as its mission to act in the case of a threat to or breach of peace and international security.

At issue in particular are the thematic debates, which for no purpose infringe on the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, whereas their contribution to the work of the Security Council and to the Organization as a whole is far from having been proven. Moreover, these discussions are seen by a large majority of Members as reflecting the wish to marginalize the General Assembly. They are also a source of tension in relations between the two bodies. That is why Algeria refused to organize a debate of that type during its term as President of the Security Council.

It is important for the Security Council to take into account and to adapt to the new institutional landscape of the Organization, which is reflected, in particular, by the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. The

Security Council can no longer rely on the alibi of human rights violations to take up consideration of a situation in which there is clearly no proven threat to international peace and security. Similarly, the Peacebuilding Commission must serve as a forum for greater synergy of efforts for the international community to ensure proper support for post-conflict countries and to help to establish lasting peace and stability. The role of the Security Council is to make certain that the transition to the peacebuilding phase is carried out in the best possible conditions.

Members of the United Nations have assigned to the Security Council primary responsibility, once again, for the maintenance of international peace and security. This delegation of responsibility, which deals with an area as sensitive as questions of peace and security, implies that the Council must respect the wishes of those who have given it this mandate, especially, when expressed by a large majority.

Such is the case with the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, in particular, where the General Assembly resolutions are systematically ignored by the Security Council. The use of the veto to prevent the Council from exercising its responsibility vis-à-vis the cause of the Palestinian people and the Arab-Israeli conflict represents a challenge to the wishes of the same community on whose behalf the Council is supposed to act. Moreover, the Council's inability to meet and to call for a ceasefire while Lebanon and its people were facing a very murderous war for an entire month represents a tendency that, unfortunately, has undermined its credibility.

One cannot stress enough the need for optimum use of the resources under Chapter VIII of the Charter and, subsequently, for cooperation with regional organizations. In this connection, we welcome the fact that this subject has an important place on the Council's agenda. Close cooperation between the African Union, its Peace and Security Council and its subregional organizations has made it possible to achieve progress in the settlement of certain conflicts in West Africa and in the Great Lakes region, in particular.

The strengthening and intensification of this coordination is more necessary than ever to cope with the crises in Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia. Today, as seen through Security Council resolution 1706 (2006), on Darfur, one can measure the extent of damage when joint efforts are lacking. The United Nations could have made Darfur a model of successful cooperation and interaction with regional organizations.

I cannot conclude this subject without recalling the duty and responsibility of the Council to defend the principles of the Charter and international legality when they concern, in particular, the right of peoples to exercise their right to self-determination. This is the case of the people of Western Sahara, who are waiting for the Council to fulfil its commitments and promises by enabling them finally to exercise this right through a free and credible referendum.

Algeria has frequently stressed that Security Council reform cannot be reduced to a mere arithmetic operation of increasing the number of seats. It is our deep conviction that any plan to reform the Council should be evaluated in terms of its capacity to respond to the three requirements of democracy, representativeness and effectiveness. In other words, Council reform will not attain its objectives fully unless it contributes to real democratization of international relations, the rehabilitation of multilateral aid, the emergence of a world order based on law, and the establishment of a modern and effective collective security system that embodies the right of all to security and development.

To have some chance of enjoying the broadest possible support among Member States — a prerequisite for success — the long-awaited reform must meet two essential conditions, as we see it. First, it must respect the principle of the sovereign equality of States; then it must have as its goal the correction of imbalances by according a large place to developing countries. In particular, the injustice afflicting the African continent must absolutely be corrected by giving Africa in the expanded Council the representation commensurate with its weight, both in terms of permanent and non-permanent seats.

Clearly, however, no progress will be possible unless the will exists to modernize the working procedures of the Council, in particular the practice of the veto. The solution by which those aspiring to permanent seats would voluntarily renounce that privilege is, perhaps, attractive from the point of view of what we might call political realism, but it is inconceivable for at least two reasons. First, the veto presents a problem, and the overwhelming majority of States believe it to be anachronistic and anti-democratic. And secondly, the creation of a third category of Council members without this veto privilege — apart from the fact that it is particularly questionable — has been rejected by the African Union, which again today has clearly and firmly asserted its right to two permanent seats with all of the privileges relating thereto.

Mr. Pak Gil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is essential for the United Nations to ensure fairness in the activities of the Security Council in order to contribute to international peace and security. One of the reasons that the Council is not playing the role greatly expected of it in efforts for international peace and security, in line with the United Nations Charter, is the lack of fairness in its activities.

Today, we are witnessing the fact that invasions of sovereign States are openly committed, patronized or tolerated, even though they result in the massacre of innocent people, while the efforts of Member States to defend their sovereignty are condemned as a threat to international peace and security. Naturally, all of these realities raise a major question as to whether the Security Council is capable of assessing who is doing the threatening and who is subjected to the threat.

The Security Council is handling many important issues, in accordance with the interests of certain specific countries; this has harmed the trust of Member States in the Council.

It is noteworthy how irresponsible and biased the Security Council was in handling the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. According to the 1994 Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework, the United States was to refrain from any nuclear threat against the Democratic People's Republic and normalize relations with it. The United States was to provide the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with light-water reactors, and the Democratic People's Republic was to dismantle all its nuclear programmes when the United States completed the construction of the light-water reactors.

However, the United States has not implemented the Agreed Framework, expecting that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would soon collapse. In particular, the Bush Administration, soon after it came into power, declared the annulment of the Agreed Framework and, designating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea part of an "axis of evil", threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike against it. With United States threats intensifying each day, the Democratic People's Republic had no other option but to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in order to defend the supreme interests of the State, and chose the road of developing nuclear weapons.

However, the Security Council, which is not in a position to say even one word against United States threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted a sanctions resolution with regard to the nuclear test of the Democratic People's Republic, which was carried out in self-defence.

Today, many facts and realities of the United Nations eloquently prove that the Security Council is adapted to serve the maintenance of the super-Power status of the United States, rather than the maintenance of international peace and security. Only when the Security Council prohibits unilateralism and high-handedness and rejects double standards in its activities can it become a responsible organ, contributing in particular to international peace and security, and will trust in the Council be improved.

Security Council reform, now under consideration, should also be aimed at ensuring fairness in the Council's activities. Only in this way would reform serve its main purpose — that of requiring the Council to fulfil its mission under the Charter in the changed circumstances of the post-cold-war era. Security Council reform is not a stereotyped issue of expanding its membership and modifying its work method. The Council should be reformed in substance.

With regard to expansion of the membership of the Security Council, we are of the view that the principle should be observed of ensuring the full representation of the non-aligned and developing countries, which make up the majority of the United Nations membership. And we hold that only when Japan, a State guilty of crimes against humanity that distorts and embellishes its history of aggression, is denied a permanent seat can humanity avert the repetition of the history of aggressive wars and holocausts of the past century.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): A few days before the end of the year, we gather here in the General Assembly today, as we do every year, to analyse the Security Council's report and to exchange once again our views on the state of its reform, the one pending issue necessary to increase its credibility and legitimacy. It seems almost unnecessary to reiterate yet again what we have been reaffirming for quite some time: If we cannot agree on the reform of the Council, it will be very difficult to achieve the objectives for which this Organization was created.

Unfortunately, the Council's report, as in all previous years, is a dry, lengthy text, almost a mere chronicle of meetings and documents. My country, which has been a member of the Council these past two years, has a fresh and up-to-date perception of how it actually works. We have participated with interest in the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, which has achieved progress this year under the efficient presidency of Japan. Together with other non-permanent members, we tried to reach agreement on improving the annual report by making it more substantive and analytic, yet that was not acceptable to the permanent members. Although there have been timid advances regarding the relationship of the Council with the general membership and with other bodies, especially the General Assembly, the agreements reached in the Council's Working Group on Documentation are minimal and of a voluntary nature. We believe that the Council could do more to improve its working methods and to increase consultations with the Assembly so as to produce a more significant annual report.

We firmly believe that the Council could ensure greater transparency in its actions by increasing the quantity and quality of its meetings with civil society. These past two years in the Council, Argentina has maintained ongoing and substantive dialogue with non-governmental organizations on all issues on the Council's agenda. We believe that, in addition to Arria formula meetings, greater efforts could be made. In that sense, we appreciate the positive progress in transparency that has been made these past two years on one issue of great importance — the election of the new Secretary-General.

We have attempted to initiate a discussion on the draft resolution submitted by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" — in the Working Group on Documentation, but that, too, has proven to be impossible. It would be very good for the Organization if today's debate were to result in a better functioning of the Council, on the understanding that this discussion and the power to make recommendations to the Council are among the competences given by the Charter in its Article 10 to this General Assembly.

These comments on working methods and on the relations between the Council and the Assembly testify to the difficulty of adding new permanent members, as that would have an even greater impact on the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Argentina once again adds its voice to those within our Organization calling for a new and fresh start, meaning an ample, constructive, sincere and above all realistic negotiation for the reform and expansion of the Security Council. It is our view that there should be no winners or losers in that reform. We have all witnessed the negative experience of the past year — the year of United Nations reform — given that Council reform has yet to be implemented. We believe that rigidity and national ambitions must be overcome for the sake of improving our Organization.

We therefore call once more on all parties to start informal contacts to obtain regional consensuses that take into consideration the variables of rotation and longer membership terms. Our goals for expansion cannot be boundless and any increase in members must take into account the efficiency of the future Security Council. We must be realistic as to the numbers involved in an expansion. The working methods, greater transparency and limitation of the right of veto to such grave cases as genocide, war crimes and others should also be our objectives at this stage of the negotiation and the topic of discussion among the permanent members.

For all of these reasons, we believe that national interests should be coordinated with global interests. The need to maintain international peace and security should be an inalienable objective. Therefore, on behalf of my country, I invite all the members of the General Assembly to assume their responsibility to respond to Security Council reform with a realistic and positive proposal that is the fruit of a commitment shared by all, which would allow the Council to work more efficiently and make it more democratic and inclusive.

Mr. Sen (India): I thank you, Madam, for convening this debate on the report of the Security Council and on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I also thank the Permanent Representative of Qatar, my colleague Ambassador Al-Nasser, for introducing the report. I always admire those who can introduce that which is unintroducible. My friend the Permanent Representative of Switzerland compared it to a telephone directory and, with his usual modesty, he was actually a little unfair to telephone directories, because a telephone directory at least contains useful telephone numbers. If the report is in any way a telephone directory, it is a directory without the numbers. Don't call us; we'll call you.

In any case, I think the report is trite in language and opaque in content. There is very little — in fact, nothing at all — on what shaped particular decisions. There are also omissions wherever there were disagreements in the Council. It is infirm in law and questionable in the context of working methods, which merely shows that the recommendations on new working methods have not really been adopted. Unless there are members who can be held responsible for transforming those recommendations into reality, we do not see how they can be adopted.

In any case, I think that the report is really the symptom and symbol of a much deeper crisis. It is, I think, something that we all can see. The majority of developing countries, which constitute the majority of the Assembly, and the small and vulnerable States should ask themselves if the exhaustion of discussing reform day and night for more than one and a half years may have actually been intensified by disillusionment with its results. Does this not also, ultimately, deny a sense of ownership? Do they have a sense that the Organization is more responsive to the small and vulnerable, that there is greater fairness and greater justice in the Organization?

As I said earlier, this is symptomatic of a deeper crisis. As we know, the old equilibrium of the cold war is gone, but no new equilibrium seems to have taken its place. The old world is dead, the new powerless to be born. Instead of the slow and sad night's departing and the rising of the morn, what we really have is a twilight world with all its burdens and sorrows. In that context, the United Nations could and ought to have been the midwife of history, but it is not able to play this role because it has not been able to effectively reform itself. This is not something that affects only the United Nations. It also holds up a pattern of governance that is in fundamental crisis.

Take the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for instance. Its articles were decided in 1944, and the tension between the world of 1944-1945 and the vastly changed world of today is really the reason why it is unable to lessen the conditionalities on developing countries, even in the latest Policy Support Instrument of 2005. That is why its fiscal recommendations actually deepened the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998, and why it does not have even a single idea worthy of the name on how to address the imbalances which are at the heart of the economic instability of our times.

The structure of the Security Council was created around the same time as the structure of the IMF, in 1945. It is therefore no coincidence that the proposed remedies or the solutions are approximately the same, namely addressing the question of the veto, the questions of transparency and accountability, the question of reassigning seats on the basis of a new formula, and the question of appointments. This is not just a coincidence. It shows that by keeping alive this structure, what we have really done, ultimately, is to bring its arms, hands and legs into the twenty-first century, but keep the head and the heart in the middle of the twentieth century. How can this strange creature walking about revitalize anything or be of any relevance to the world?

I think, therefore, that it is amply clear that — and we are not being unfair here — if, let us say, the IMF could actually maintain world economic stability, and if the Security Council could actually maintain world peace and security, then even their imperfect, antiquated, perhaps unjust structures could be accepted. But this is manifestly not the case. That is why there is an urgent need for reform.

By not reforming, we are actually keeping alive an antiquated and counterproductive system of governance externally — outside these walls — that is preventing the delivery of development and of results that benefit of all countries, hence the exhaustion which is visible even today in this Hall, in the attendance and in the sense of ownership. It is necessary, therefore, to address the real problems. I am not speaking today in terms of the draft resolution or text submitted by the group of four, and it is unfortunate that many continue to speak in terms of the Uniting for Consensus resolutions and texts of the past. We have to see what the problem is and then devise solutions to address it.

Here, the analogy of painting a portrait is very relevant. Results can be achieved if we keep throwing away initial sketches, if we keep changing the canvas. Ultimately, we will still improve — hopefully — the portrait of the subject. But we will never get anywhere if we change, or throw away, the subject of the portrait. It is important, therefore, to see what the real problems are today and consider solutions to address them.

I should therefore like to explore, together with other members of the Assembly, what these real problems are and whether we can reach an understanding on them, and then we can decide on the elements that could provide a solution. There is no point in reform for the sake of reform, as has been said, or in fashioning solutions to problems that are quite different from those that we face, because those solutions would not help in the least. They would simply give the illusion of reform — the illusion of change — without any real change. By simply expanding the Security Council without addressing the problem, the illusion of reform may be achieved, but would any of the problems that we actually face be addressed?

The Security Council itself, as we all know, seems to be reaching the end of its shelf life. Structural cracks have already appeared. What we need, therefore, is a capital master plan, not only for the building but for what is inside it, around the corner. That is amply clear from the many recent events that have been mentioned by so many members during the course of this debate. The Secretary-General, for instance, has said that its handling of certain recent events has shaken the faith of the world in its authority, its legitimacy and its integrity.

No real serious problem has been successfully and fully resolved; many are arguably worse. What we have seen is proof of Newton's Third Law of Motion — that for every force, there is a force equal in magnitude acting in the opposite direction. It has been said: "Let justice be done though the heavens fall." But the justice of the Security Council, if done at all, is done after the heavens fall. That is why we have been so busy catching skylarks.

In the post-cold-war period, the checks and balances that earlier gave space to the General Assembly are no longer there. Therefore it is not surprising that we have seen a progressive usurpation of the powers of the General Assembly by the Security Council. This has been experienced in the reform process itself. I will not go into detail, but let me mention the Peacebuilding Commission, among many other things. It has been discussed in the work of this body. It is responsible for the deeper disillusionments and for the divisions. If we go on like this, we will see only a progressive coarsening of the United Nations, with deepening mistrust.

Can this progressive usurpation really be set right by adding to the number of non-permanent members — by having renewability? I am merely posing questions. Can we really redress the balance in this manner? The situation is fairly acute. There is a progressive lack of legitimacy, decisions are not optimal and acceptability is low, so that an increased use of force is necessary. In this situation, the Security Council is something that an individual State cannot easily defy; that the Charter cannot effectively bind; that the General Assembly cannot easily constrain; and that the International Court of Justice cannot automatically review. The right of review, as we know from Justice Marshall's famous decision in *Marbury vs. Madison*, is a fundamental democratic tenet. Would adding more non-permanent members actually address this problem of the correlation of power? Would it actually redress the situation? Or would it not, as the chairman of the Forum of Small States — which form the vast majority of this Organization — my friend the Permanent Representative of Singapore, said, would it not, rather, make this problem far worse?

It would, quite obviously, make it far worse by ensuring that the 80 or so Members of the United Nations that have never sat on the Security Council would continue not to sit on the Council. If there is the element of renewability — if non-permanent members can go on being renewed — would that not actually reduce the chance of a seat for a small and vulnerable State, which today can hope to sit on the Council once in 40 years? Would not that chance be reduced to once in 80 years?

Let us look at another problem that has been highlighted by many Members: the problem of accountability. Unfortunately, many have conflated this with the problem of elections. Do elections alone actually ensure accountability? Are they sufficient? They may be a necessary condition, but are they a sufficient condition to ensure accountability? Are the non-permanent members today accountable, and, if so, to whom? Are the regional and other groups that vote for and elect non-permanent members able to hold them accountable? Elections, therefore — particularly if they take the form of auctions — can hardly ensure accountability.

We have a situation in which a body is imperfect. Can an election to that body of non-permanent members, in the face of the fact of power, really make the members more accountable? Is it not likely to make them less accountable and to make it more difficult for them to be accountable?

As in the case of economics, when welfare is maximized, not simply through getting prices right or through liberalization, but through direct, positive policies dealing with employment — which, it may be remembered, was really the Keynesian idea behind the stillborn International Trade Organization — separate positive policies on accountability are required. That would mean looking at the question of a permanent revolution through a permanent self-sustaining review mechanism, possibly through an amendment or an addition to Chapter II of the Charter, which would embody the democratic principle — the oldest democratic principle, which goes back to Rousseau — of the right of recall. Then we would have real accountability. And that, in fact, was suggested by a few very significant developing countries, members of the African Union, at a recent and well-attended informal meeting.

In that way we could have real accountability. Such accountability must encompass the United Nations as a whole — including the Secretariat — and not just the Security Council. The question of accountability would touch the new permanent members, it would touch all non-permanent members, and it would touch the Secretariat. It should encompass all of those. Here, I think that the United States Constitution should be a model, because it has an ideal balance between flexibility and accountability. Therefore here, too, the Secretary-General could have the flexibility to appoint Deputy Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General, but with hearings and confirmations by the General Assembly to ensure the principle of accountability.

We must, therefore, consider the real problems that exist. Would the simple addition of non-permanent members with renewable extended seats address the problems that really exist? Those problems are the result of an unnatural concentration of blood in one organ and its lack of flow through other organs, bringing them to near-atrophy. This brings to mind some lines from a poem by Dr. Johnson, contained in his little-known play *Irene*:

> "A happy land, where circulating power
> Flows through each member of the embodied
> State".

But if there is not such a flow, if we actually have the fact of oligarchy and the fact of a concentration of power, would not a solution that does not address the problems of a concentration of power, the problem of oligarchy, the question of accountability or the question of correlation of power be simply reform for the sake of reform, giving us the illusion of reform without any actual reform?

So we have to be very clear about what the real problems are and how they should be addressed. Only then can we possibly devise solutions that would really be of help to the United Nations and change the fundamental balance.

One of the leading lights of the doctrine of simply adding to the non-permanent membership and of having renewable elections, and so forth, mentioned at great length the problems of the Security Council and the problems with peace and security in the world today, and yet felt that simply by adding renewable non-permanent seats we could solve those problems. He referred at great length to the problem of the usurpation of the authority of the General Assembly, yet felt that adding non-permanent members could address that. If that is the case, why have non-permanent members not mitigated those problems so far? Why have they not been able to check usurpation?

So let us not simply have reform for the sake of reform. Similarly, in looking at an interim solution, we should consider whether such a solution would actually address the fundamental problems of the correlation of power, oligarchy and accountability. Otherwise, the interim solution would again be simply reform for the sake of reform. It would give the illusion of change without any real change, and leave all of the real problems unaddressed. Indeed, it might even make them worse.

So let us not do what the poet Shelley once warned against — that is, go to a gin shop for a leg of mutton. If one wants gin, one should go to a gin shop;

one should not go there for a leg of mutton. That would not be helpful.

Also, if we look at the question of renewable seats, we will see that that has actually been tried out. It was tried out — actually permitted and practised — in an organization called the League of Nations. It neither saved the League of Nations nor ensured accountability. That is a fact of history.

When I look at the arguments of the proponents of adding renewable non-permanent seats, I am reminded of one of the greatest novelists of the United States today, Thomas Pynchon, and his recently published novel *Against the Day*, in which he asks, "What were they doing out here, this late in history" with all the "dismal metonymies of the dead" behind them?

I think that it is important to address these real questions. We have no dogma about any particular solution. We have no dogma about this or that fixed idea. As I said, let us paint the portrait of an actual subject. Let us not throw away the subject. We can go on shifting the canvases — we do not mind; we have no dogma about that. We can go on throwing away the sketches — that is not a problem. But let us not throw away the subject, because unless we address the central problem, what is the point?

Turning to working methods, I think that the most important resolution on working methods was — if my memory does not fail me — resolution 267 (III) of 14 April 1949. That resolution was actually adopted. It dealt with the problem of the veto; it dealt with the problem of the General Assembly giving advice even on questions that were being discussed by the Security Council; it dealt with the question of the troop-contributing countries being part of the decision-making, not just the discussion; it dealt with a host of issues — I will not list them, so as not to take up too much of the Assembly's time. But members can look it up.

There are two things there that strike us. First, if we compare the world of 1949 to the world of today, we will see that there has been a progressive diminution of the authority of the General Assembly. At least in 1949 that resolution was actually introduced and adopted overwhelmingly. Today, we have reached a point where it is difficult for the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — even to introduce a draft resolution, let alone have it adopted.

Secondly, why have new working methods not been adopted in the past more than half a century? Quite clearly, they have not been adopted — that is a fact. Will adding more non-permanent members lead to the adoption of new working methods? Unless there are new permanent members in the midst of the permanent members who introduce the elective principle — the accountability principle — and who are surrounded by separate, direct action on accountability through a self-sustaining, permanent review mechanism — specifically, through additions to Chapter II regarding the right of recall — would such working methods be achieved? Or would that be done by simply adopting yet another resolution or adding new permanent members?

Above all, would such a solution empower Africa? No reform, unless it empowers Africa, which has been at the receiving end of history and continues to be in many respects, is of any use; it is unavailing. Will it really increase the access of small and vulnerable countries to the Security Council? Will it increase their participation in the subsidiary bodies of the Council? Those are the questions that we have to ask ourselves.

This resolution — 267 (III) — mentions, as I said, the question of the veto. Certainly, many Members have talked about the principle of the veto, which is an important principle. It is said that although the devil is in the details, we have to examine everything in detail, minutely and with some fineness. What is the problem of the veto? Essentially — at least according to all the discussions that I heard yesterday and today in this Hall — it is either a problem of quantity, of immediately giving the veto to more countries, or a problem of quality, of how to place restrictions on the veto that would ensure that it is used to further the principles of international law and the interests of the international community, and not simply to further individual national interests.

Is that not really the problem? And if it is, can any restrictions be placed on the veto? There are those who believe and say that the veto has never been amended. The short answer is that the veto has been amended. The only thing is, it has been amended through an informal process and therefore through something that remains legally infirm.

The Charter clearly speaks of the concurring votes of all of the permanent members. If we read the

Charter commentaries of 1946, we find that abstention was treated as a veto. But that is not the case today. So what we have is the formless amendment of the principle of the veto. The problem is that that kind of amendment is actually a form of lawmaking through lawbreaking, because the Charter can be amended only through a formal process that is set out in Articles 108 and 109; it cannot simply be formlessly amended by the permanent members. But that is what has happened. The downside is that the General Assembly cannot challenge as legally invalid a decision by the Security Council with an abstention by one of the permanent members because of the principle of estoppel — because it has been accepted for so long. Juridically speaking, the Assembly cannot even insist on continuing this practice, because the permanent members can go back to the earlier interpretation at any time they choose, without any legal hindrance.

Therefore, we have to see how restrictions can be placed on the veto. I believe that the United States Constitution — to which I have already referred — also contains some very fundamental ideas concerning this question, because it stipulates that a presidential veto can be overridden by the Congress. Here, perhaps we could look at special majorities in the Security Council or the General Assembly that could override a Council veto.

Then again, we have this fundamental tension in the Charter between maintaining peace and security — saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, as the famous phrase goes — and actually defending individual rights. The Security Council is very quick to include matters involving individual rights on its agenda, but without completing the logic of it, even though it is wrong to bring matters that really amount to a formless amendment of Article 39, of what constitutes a threat to peace and security. There have been other such amendments, such as the amendment to Article 29, which empowers the setting up of subsidiary bodies, but through which legal tribunals have been set up. Here, quite clearly, the Security Council simply does not have the legal power, so it cannot give such power to a tribunal. The Council is a body for implementing the law on peace and security, for being a firefighter on peace and security, not for making laws.

The Security Council puts individual rights on its agenda, but it is not willing to work to the full the paradigm of individual rights, where there is no place for the veto. The veto was not up set up within the paradigm of individual rights. So here again is the question of restriction. Other restrictions on the right of the veto are possible. In particular, if we look at Oppenheim's extremely authoritative *International Law: A Treatise,* it clearly says that if a permanent member were to use the veto to prevent a Charter amendment for which well above a two-thirds majority of the membership has voted — and which is therefore in the interests of the international community — that would be an abuse of the veto. It would be illegal, because it would be not using the veto to further the interests of the international community. Therefore, even a veto on this kind of amendment is subject both to restriction and to legal challenge.

Having dealt with these issues, let us be very clear that today's rules of procedure of the Security Council — in fact, the Council's working methods in general — do not leave much to be desired; rather, they leave everything to be desired. These provisional rules of procedure are provisional to the point of not being there. Thus, we have some kind of new rule of procedure on how to make encroachment respectable, and emasculation of the General Assembly acceptable. It is a triumph of power over reason, rules and logic. The real problems that we face today — which spill over into the problems of peace and security — are the problems showing that the Security Council is not a solution, but a part of the problem. It is a fetter holding back change, a fetter on addressing the problems of the twenty-first century, a fetter on peace and prosperity for the world.

Therefore, together with our colleagues in the Group of Four, with the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5), with our colleagues in the African Union, even with our colleagues in Uniting for Consensus, and with the wider membership — especially the developing countries, which we need to listen to in particular — we intend to work out new proposals that actually address the problems and therefore provide a real solution, rather than simply tilting at windmills, living in a world of fantasy and addressing imaginary problems with imaginary solutions.

For us, the choice today is very clear: either we move forward and become relevant, or we fall back. The General Assembly feels the mildew coming over it and its bones turn to a paste. The choice is between substance and being content with a shadow, between the reality of change and mere illusion, between continuing as we are and continuing in an even worse form.

We will certainly work on these proposals with other Member States. We are open to ideas. We are prepared to look at all suggestions, at all possible ideas, so long as just one condition is met: that they address the real problems that we have outlined. Only then can we have a situation in which — as one of the leaders said at a recent forum in New Delhi — we overcome the problems of division, military blocs, force and red-bar activities and make this body truly a force for peace, progress and prosperity.

We look on this, finally, as an inclusive process. As developing countries, we want to address the problem of the exclusion of developing countries, but we wish to address the problem of exclusion in an inclusive way. That is the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, of what we believe in and of what we stand for.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is well known that the international system is currently undergoing a functional transformation accompanied by acute crises and entrenched conflicts. In the final analysis, that is the root cause of the obstacles to the reform of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Security Council. We would like to hope that this transformation of the bipolar system of the cold war will lead to a world order based on collective approaches and respect for international law.

The understanding that there is no alternative to addressing existing issues through multilateral diplomacy, with the United Nations playing the central role, is, as we have seen, making headway at this session of the General Assembly. Importantly, the Organization continues to undergo renewal to adapt itself to the tasks and challenges of our time. The scale and complexity of United Nations reform vividly highlight the need to reach the widest possible agreement, ideally a consensus, of all Member States on the whole spectrum of reform issues. That approach remains fully applicable in relation to such a sensitive issue as Security Council reform.

The differences of position on that problem remain deep, and no model of Council enlargement today enjoys the truly broad support of the Members of the United Nations. We are convinced that premature action on that important aspect of United Nations reform is unacceptable, while the search for agreement should continue on the basis of collective and transparent efforts. It is in the common interest not to allow any premature steps in the enlargement of the Security Council that could negatively affect other tracks of the Organization's reform process and in general the effectiveness of United Nations activities aimed at tackling urgent international issues.

Russia's principled stand on that matter is unchanged. We are ready to consider constructively any reasonable option for enlarging Security Council membership that is based on the broadest agreement within the United Nations — an agreement broader than the two thirds of the votes of General Assembly members legally required to adopt a decision on that matter.

Making the Council a more representative body remains a key target, but it should be done without undermining the effectiveness of its work, since that body bears the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. That is why we are in favour of preserving the compact membership of the Council and are convinced of the counterproductivity of ideas that limit the prerogatives of its current permanent members, including the institution of the right of veto as a whole.

Russia has been a consistent supporter of and active participant in the efforts of the Security Council aimed at improving its working methods, including enhancing the transparency of its activities and improving dialogue with non-members. In that work, we take due account of provisions of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit.

We should recognize the positive developments of recent years in the practices of the Security Council. In particular, much has been done within the framework of the existing procedures to provide an opportunity for all concerned States to deliver in due time their opinion to members of the Council and to receive more complete and current information on its activities. The facts and statistical data referred to in the statement made by the President of the Security Council, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar, speak for themselves.

The members of the Security Council appreciate the important contributions of troop-contributing countries to the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations overseen by the Security

Council. They enhance cooperation with such Member States and with the Secretariat. Furthermore, the Council, through its Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will be taking the necessary steps effectively to involve troop-contributing countries and other interested States in decision-making on peacekeeping issues.

We continue to believe that the expertise provided to the Security Council in the military aspects of peacekeeping would be improved through the revitalization of the activities of the Military Staff Committee, with flexible involvement in its work of all Security Council members and countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations.

Yet another manifestation of the rational transparency of the Security Council work is the enhancement by its subsidiary bodies on sanctions of dialogue with a wide range of countries and regional and other organizations in order to improve sanctions regimes and ensure strict compliance with Security Council embargoes on arms exports into conflict zones.

We highly appreciate the significant work of the Security Council's Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions headed by Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations. One concrete outcome of its activities is the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2006/507) that was adopted on 19 July 2006, giving a detailed outline of the positive developments in the Council's practice. The sometimes difficult experience of the consultations on measures outlined in that document vividly demonstrates that initiatives to improve the Council's working methods promote progress in reform of that principal United Nations organ only when they enjoy the unanimous support of its members.

On the basis of those principles, Russia is committed to continuing constructively to facilitate the achievement of a necessary agreement in this area, guided by its responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Qatar for presenting the annual report of the Council to the Assembly. The report deserves our careful consideration in all its aspects, including its format and content.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and concur with him that a more comprehensive and analytical annual report to the General Assembly assessing the work of the Council, including in cases where the Council has failed to act, is necessary for a thorough consideration.

As to the working methods of the Council, we have noted that a few steps were taken in the period under review. Although important, those steps have yet to meet the legitimate expectations of the general membership, which has long called for genuine transparency and real change in the Council's working methods. Transparency, impartiality and fairness are key premises on which the Security Council should base its approach in discharging its Charter-mandated responsibilities. Nonetheless, we continue to witness a tendency to undermine those principles by a few permanent members of the Council.

Such practices continued to occur in the period under review, including a continued disregard of Article 31 of the Charter, which entitles any non-Council member to participate in discussions on matters affecting it. The violation of that principle has included denial of the right of the concerned countries to apprise the Council of their positions on issues affecting the Council's decisions and their immediate national interests, or giving them the possibility to speak only after decisions have been adopted. Furthermore, selective notification about some meetings of the Council, reluctance to convene daily briefings and restriction of the participation of the general membership in some open debates are other examples of persistent deficiencies.

In our view, to increase the transparency of its work and improve its working methods, the Council should seriously take into consideration the relevant provisions of the Charter as well as the resolutions that clarify its relationship with the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations, specifically Assembly resolution 58/126. In the same vein, rule 48 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure should be thoroughly observed, and, accordingly, closed meetings and informal consultations should be kept to a minimum and as the exception they were meant to be.

In the period under review, we have witnessed an unjustifiable increase in the number of cases of encroachment by the Security Council on the powers and mandates of other United Nations bodies. In so doing, the Council has taken up issues that present no threat to international peace and security or that fall within the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Quick and unnecessary resort to Chapter VII of the Charter and the threat or use of sanctions in cases where either no action has been necessary or provisions of Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter had not been fully utilized is another dangerous trend which has marked the Council's approach regarding certain issues, despite the dissenting views of an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

Even more disturbing is the persistence and exacerbation of the pattern of behaviour on the part of certain Powers permanently represented on the Council that have, on the one hand, continued to push that body to no action, rendering it incapacitated in cases where action was really and urgently necessary, while on the other hand rushing the Council to take unwarranted action in cases that posed no threat to international peace and security nor presented any reason for the Council to be involved.

Sadly, there is a clear tendency to downgrade the Security Council to "a tool in the toolbox" of certain Powers, to quote one of the permanent members who recently acknowledged this fact. Such a dangerous intention and practice has seriously damaged the credibility and legitimacy of the Council and, as the Secretary-General warned in the course of Israeli aggression against Lebanon, has eroded its authority universally. We should not miss the momentum to rectify these shortcomings in our endeavour to reform the work of the Council.

The report refers to the actions taken by the Security Council regarding the peaceful nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It must be emphasized that far from reflecting the concerns of the international community, as advertised, the approach imposed on the Council in addressing this issue flouts the stated position of the overwhelming majority of the international community, clearly reflected in the most recent statements by the heads of State and Government of the 118 members of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which have clearly supported Iran's rights and rejected the actions by the Council. It is indeed deplorable that the propensity of certain permanent members to abuse the Security Council as an instrument of pressure has prevented them from even considering a multitude of alternatives presented by Iran and others that could, and still can, guarantee Iran's rights and at the same time preclude any possibility of diversion, and in the process strengthen the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The report also refers to the situation in the Middle East, especially the Palestinian question, which has continued to be under consideration by the Council. In the period under review, the situation on the ground deteriorated as a result of Israeli aggression and crimes against the people in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, and its continued occupation of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian lands. The Council was persistently rendered ineffective in addressing these crimes despite their gravity. During the period under review, two draft resolutions on the Palestinian issue were again vetoed, and efforts to end Israeli aggression against Lebanon were thwarted and delayed for 34 long days. Moreover, no action has been allowed, or even contemplated, to ensure compliance by the Israeli regime with many Security Council resolutions adopted over the last six decades.

Allow me to conclude by addressing the reform of the Security Council. It is abundantly clear that the composition of the Council does not correspond to today's realities, and this deficiency should be thoroughly addressed. The debate in the Working Group has proved that, despite some limited success in the area of working methods, significant progress has yet to be made on substantive matters such as the size and composition of the Council and the veto power. We continue to believe that the Council must become more democratic, more representative, more accountable and more effective in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. The deficiency in legitimacy that the Council is obviously suffering from today will be rectified only by creating a situation whereby developing countries are more fairly represented in the Council, the question of representation of more than one billion Muslims is adequately addressed, and the democratization of the Council is sufficiently accomplished.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to discuss the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. In this connection, we associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the permanent representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is concerned that little headway has been made in our efforts to reform the Security Council. It is important for us to remind ourselves that no reform of the United Nations is complete without the reform of the Security Council. All of us agree that the Council's current structure is far removed from the realities of the present world, and its working methods and decision-making processes are far from being transparent, inclusive and democratic.

As the organ charged with maintaining international peace and security, it is imperative for the Security Council to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness. The Council has to improve its working methods so as to be more transparent and accountable to the wider membership. Its structure has to change in order to be more representative and democratic. Today's geopolitical situation dictates that membership be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. In that context, we continue to support the aspirations of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil to be permanent members. We also support adequate representation of Africa in the permanent category.

As you stated yesterday morning, Madam, while our efforts so far have not led to an agreement, we should not lose hope in our ability to make progress on that important matter. It is therefore our fervent hope that, under your dynamic leadership, the General Assembly at its sixty-first session will be able to bring to fruition the long-overdue reform of the Security Council. In that context, my delegation would like to reiterate that the proposal submitted by the Group of Four at the sixtieth session addresses both structural and substantive issues of Security Council reform and provides a good basis for working towards a formula that will command the widest possible support of the membership.

Mr. Yaroshevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, the delegation of Belarus welcomes the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The need to preserve and strengthen the role of the Security Council as a central element in the maintenance of international peace and security is beyond question. Many are the instances when the Council has worked to attain those noble goals and achieved real results, saving lives, preventing international conflicts, and restoring stability in regions throughout the world. At the same time, the Security Council has been unable to take timely action to prevent the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East.

The effective work of the Council not only requires a speedy and concerted response to the destabilization of international relations throughout the world, but also presupposes the need to take balanced decisions in that regard. A quest for balanced reactions to emerging conflict situations in international relations should be one of the decisive factors in the activity of the Security Council. That should be kept in mind particularly in the elaboration of approaches to resolving the issue of Iran's nuclear programme. It is equally important to take into account the positions of all interested sides, including the Government of the Sudan, in addressing the problem of Darfur.

The ongoing evolution of the international situation requires the Security Council to work on complex regional issues without diverting its attention from others. In that regard, we are concerned by the attempts of some members of the Council to bring before the Council issues that are not related to the maintenance of international peace and security and the consideration of which is the responsibility of the General Assembly.

It is important to pursue efforts to enhance the openness of the Security Council's work. Transparency will raise the level of trust in and respect for its activity. There is a need to increase the number of public meetings of the Council in which non-members can participate and to propose ideas to help the Security Council make more operative and effective decisions.

The delegation of Belarus reiterates its position on the need for deep reform of the composition of the Security Council. In our opinion, the enlargement of the Security Council by including developing countries should be a key element of the reform. We also believe that an additional seat in the Security Council should be allocated to the Eastern European Group.

The composition of the Security Council should better reflect the geopolitical situation of the twenty-first century. Nobody rejects that idea; in fact, everybody agrees with it and uses it. However, the process of Council reform has yet to make progress this year. A strong push and significant impulse are required to boost the process of Security Council reform.

In the course of debate on existing concepts of reform, the idea of choosing one as a basis for further negotiation and reaching a consensus has been repeatedly voiced. The representative of China, among others, referred to that yesterday, and we agree. The situation calls on us to make an atypical decision. Why should we not borrow the method that was used in the Security Council during the elections of the Secretary-General? The General Assembly could take a straw poll on every version offered for reform. A version that receives the most votes will be a basis for further negotiations. Certainly, the elements of other versions would also be taken into account in the further work on the formula for Council enlargement.

It is high time to move from words to deeds. A first practical step must be taken to define a basic approach that enjoys the largest support of the Member States, including the permanent members of the Security Council. Once that is done, we will be able to move ahead significantly towards the creation of a Security Council that will be optimally adapted to the realities of the modern world.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Security Council for this month, Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser of Qatar, for introducing the annual report of the Security Council. I would also like to commend the efforts of the Secretariat in producing the report.

According to the report, the volume and scope of the Security Council's activities continued to increase over the past year. We note with concern that Africa is still the scene of the majority of issues before the Security Council.

There have been some positive developments in Africa. Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo seem to be on track in moving from conflict to stability, with the process of nation-building under way and bolstered by recent successful elections. In many other parts of the continent, however, instability continues. In particular, the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan is still going on, and fresh reports of increasing violence indicate that the situation is not improving. Another area of serious concern is Côte d'Ivoire, where elections once again could not take place as scheduled, and anxieties are increasing. We hope to see improvements in those countries over the upcoming year.

During the past year, the Security Council has continued to devote considerable attention to the situation in Iraq. Unfortunately, the security situation in Iraq is still deeply troubling. We appreciate the continuing efforts of President Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Iraqi Government as a whole to overcome the security and other challenges and work towards national reconciliation. We welcome the progress on the International Compact with Iraq. The Republic of Korea remains committed to helping Iraq implement the Compact and achieve its national vision, which seeks to build a secure, unified, federal and democratic nation founded on the principles of freedom and equality.

With regard to Lebanon, we support the continuing efforts of the Security Council to establish peace and stability in the country. We support Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) on the strengthening of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and we are committed to playing a substantive role in that endeavour.

Elsewhere in Asia, Afghanistan has made some encouraging progress on the political, security and reconstruction fronts. Despite those positive signs, the deteriorating security situation in the southern and eastern parts of the country is distressing, as is the increased activity of the Taliban and other armed groups. It is clear that the international community must continue to assist Afghanistan in its transition to peace and stability. For our part, the Republic of Korea will maintain the ongoing troop presence that we have provided since 2002.

We note with appreciation that the Security Council responded firmly and swiftly to the actions taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopting resolutions 1695 (2006) on its missile launch and 1718 (2006) on its nuclear test. We hope that the Democratic People's Republic will heed the united voice of the international community and take concrete steps for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. In this regard, we welcome the scheduled resumption of the Six-Party Talks in Beijing on 18 December and hope that the Talks will make substantial progress towards our common goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Let me now turn to the issue of Security Council reform. The Republic of Korea fully recognizes the importance of Security Council reform in the context of overall reform of the United Nations. We support a reformed Council that is more effective, representative, transparent, democratic and accountable. We believe that these principles are widely shared among Member States and that they should be applied not only to Security Council reform but also to overall reform efforts throughout the Organization. If any one of these principles is abandoned in pursuit of hasty reform, the long-term effects will be to weaken the authority of the Council and undermine the United Nations reform process as a whole.

We welcome the initiatives that have so far been put forward to enhance the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the Council's work. We are pleased to see that ways to improve transparency and working methods are under consideration within the Council. We welcome these developments and support the steps taken so far by the Council to improve its working methods. Building on this progress, we believe that further reform is needed to make the Council more transparent, democratic and efficient.

Reform of the Security Council's working methods goes hand in hand with the reform of its membership. On this issue, we share the position of the Uniting for Consensus group that the best way to reform the Council membership is through an increase in non-permanent, elected seats, not through the addition of permanent members. The proposal of the Uniting for Consensus group would make it possible for each region to devise its own arrangements to ensure that large, medium and small States are all represented in an enlarged Security Council.

The Republic of Korea remains ready for dialogue with any other Member States in the hope of achieving our common goal of reforming the Security Council. We look forward to an open and transparent process of consultation and negotiation, with a view to reaching the broadest possible agreement on this critical issue. We hope that in our collective wisdom, we can reform the Security Council so that it can better fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the important issue of Security Council reform and expansion.

The 2005 World Summit clearly spelled out the need for early reform of the Security Council. We have seen progress on working methods, but when it comes to expansion we are facing a stalemate. To ensure a more efficient United Nations, the Security Council's structure and membership must reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. We cannot allow the present stalemate to continue. The perfect solution might not be within reach, but in that case we should be willing to accept less than perfect, as long as the overall purpose is served. The time has come to search all avenues for ideas and proposals. All parties must exercise flexibility and be willing to compromise in order to reach consensus.

Allow me briefly to restate Denmark's position on Security Council reform.

The Security Council must continue to play a decisive role in the promotion of peace, security, human rights and democracy. To do so more effectively, broader representation is needed. Therefore Denmark supports parallel expansion by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats and by including both developing and developed countries as permanent members.

Furthermore, the Council's working methods and transparency must be strengthened. We welcome the work being done by the Council to improve its working methods, especially efforts to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the work, as well as stronger interaction with non-Council members. We look forward to the full implementation of the improved working methods and urge the Council to continue exploring ways to further enhance them.

For 13 years, reform of the Security Council has been on our agenda. The time has come to search for new ideas, to show flexibility and to compromise. I can assure the Assembly that Denmark will continue to engage actively in constructive dialogue on how to reform the Council.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): On this occasion, my delegation wishes to raise several points that are of particular importance for my country, taking into account their connection with the maintenance of international peace and security and the process of reform within our Organization. We are founding members of the Organization, and we have supported it throughout its history, abiding by its decisions, promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, complying with the obligatory nature of the highest tribunal of justice and, above all, by complying with the norms of international law.

First, we express appreciation for the report of the Security Council, contained in document A/61/2, presented to the General Assembly by Ambassador Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the month of December. The report reflects the work and quantifies and illustrates the main items that the Council dealt with between 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006.

My country, Honduras, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), shares most of the views expressed yesterday by the President of the NAM on reform of the Security Council. We advocate more and better coherence in its work, transparency in the political decision-making process and the final adoption of its provisional rules of procedure as official rules. These issues require immediate attention within the reform process.

For my delegation, the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council (A/60/47), which has been in operation since 1993, is of crucial importance. We have been following its work and have participated and spoken in its meetings when we felt that that was appropriate.

The process of Security Council reform should focus in particular on matters related to the Council's working methods. We recognize the efforts made by the Council itself to achieve greater transparency in its decision-making process and, above all, to provide an opportunity, as is now the case, for Member States to speak in open debates on specific items. We believe that these opportunities should be increased because we are certain that this approach makes a substantial contribution to the Council's discussions.

I wish to recall the chapter of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/1) devoted to the strengthening of the United Nations and, in particular, paragraph 161 of the report, which states, "I have always maintained that no reform of the United Nations will be complete without the reform of the Security Council".

During the discussion and adoption of the Millennium Declaration, our delegation participated and endorsed that document, in which our heads of State or Government called for "a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects" (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*). Five years later, they affirmed that reform of the Security Council was "an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*). We support all of those principles and concepts.

Increasing the membership of that body within the framework of the principle of equitable geographical representation, in either of the two categories, is essential and should be seen as something that will help it to make the decisions it adopts more democratic and transparent. Accordingly, achieving the desired consensus will make a more comprehensive contribution to the strengthening of the United Nations as a whole.

Procedural reform should also include a serious, in-depth, complete consideration of the right of the veto, by both current and aspiring permanent members. We agree with the idea of ongoing dialogue between those with differing views, with the ultimate goal of finding a consensus solution.

With regard to increasing the membership per se, our Organization has expanded its horizons, and the situation in 1945 was not the same as today's. The complexity of the international situation, globalization, progress in information technology, and the many other dizzying changes that are occurring in the world, have placed some States members of the United Nations system in the vanguard in terms of their activities at the global and regional levels in areas such as international cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security.

After more than a decade of work, we have felt that it is important to give fresh impetus to the reform process. Countries such as Brazil in Latin America, India and Japan in Asia and Germany in Europe, along with appropriate representation for Africa, could make a contribution to the work of the Council. Therefore, we believe that they should in future have an opportunity to serve this very important United Nations organ.

We congratulate the new non-permanent members which will represent the various regions for the next 24 months, in particular, the sister Republic of Panama for Latin America and the Caribbean, a member of the Central American Integration System, as well as our friends Belgium, Indonesia, Italy and South Africa.

In conclusion, I wish to say that Honduras hopes to see a more democratic Organization whose principal organs reflect the aspirations of our peoples, with genuine transparency, more just and equitable representation in accordance with the historical development of our society. In particular, we hope to have an Organization which can promote and maintain peace, the peace that we all long for, that we all seek, the peace that is the dream of our children, our women and our men — indeed, the peace that is the dream of us all.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): Madam President, thank you very much indeed for convening the debate on this very important topic. We would also like to thank Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the month of December, for presenting the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, as contained in document A/61/2.

Indonesia associates itself with the remarks made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are once again pleased to welcome the report of the Security Council, which provides us with a summary of the work of the Council over the preceding year pertaining to its mandate in the area of the international peace and security. However, the report still equips us only with a descriptive picture of the Council's work. We are aware of the difficulty and hard work involved in the preparation of the report. However, we believe that we still can inject it with more vigour in order to make the report more illuminating. We hope that in the future, the annual report will also contain, among other things, an analytical assessment of the cases under the Council's consideration and an explanatory discussion of the constraints and opportunities that the Council faces in the implementation of its resolutions.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, we would like to reiterate our position that it is one of the priorities which should be accomplished comprehensively in order to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the Council. Our delegation is of the view that the principles of democracy, accountability, equity and geographical balance should be the guiding philosophy in our endeavour to reform the Council, which we believe needs to happen with the broadest possible agreement.

The Council's membership and working methods need substantive revision. However, if there are difficulties in reaching an understanding about Council enlargement, that should not prevent us from trying to make progress in the discussion on improving the Council's working methods. We view comprehensive reform of the Security Council as an integral aspect of the overall United Nations reform process.

In that connection, we would like to thank Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands and Ambassador Paulette Bethel of the Bahamas for serving as Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. The responsibility is now on all of us to rise above our differences and work constructively to achieve positive results for the greater good of humanity. The stakes have never been higher.

The Council can be effective in the exercise of its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security only if it is perceived as fair and as representing the interests of the global public. Therefore, a true democratic approach, transparency and an equitable geographical composition would help the Council to perform its tasks with greater credibility and impact. Indonesia is open to considering various proposals on Council reform, including reform of its membership and its working methods, so long as the fundamental principles outlined earlier are followed.

Our view remains that the Security Council should increase the number of open meetings at which the views of Member States are taken into consideration as input into the work of the Council, rather than as reactions soon after the adoption of a resolution. The Council's transparency would also increase further if its debates — which sometimes are held without having been scheduled or with selective notification — were convened in a more open manner.

We welcome the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, under the able chairmanship of Japan, which has been successful in formulating changes to the Council's working methods, as set out in document S/2006/507. We consider the Informal

Working Group to be a complementary contribution to improving the Council's working methods.

We believe that there is a need to hold more frequent and regular meetings with the troop-contributing countries, whose peacekeepers face the ultimate risks in the maintenance of peace and have a unique perspective regarding the situation on the ground. The decision-making of the Security Council would improve further if it invited regular appraisals by the countries sending troops.

The General Assembly, as a truly encompassing platform, must continue to play its due role in international affairs. There may be a need for it to do more, particularly when the Security Council fails to take action. There is also a need for the Council to interact more closely and substantively with other United Nations organs, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. However, it should refrain from an expanded interpretation of international peace and security.

Indonesia looks forward to playing an active role in the Security Council when it assumes its non-permanent membership in January 2007. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Member States for giving us their support and trust. We reaffirm to all Member States our full support in furthering the role of the United Nations to help build a safe and prosperous world for all of our peoples.

Mr. Anzola Quinto (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We thank the representative of the State of Qatar for introducing the report of the Security Council (A/61/2).

We note that the report continues to be merely descriptive. It is a chronological compendium of meetings and documents, which does not make it possible to assess the achievements, progress and complexities of the Council's work. We hope that the Council will be able to submit a more analytical report that will contribute to the understanding of the way in which it addressed the various items on its agenda, the way in which it arrived at its decisions and the reasons why it did not consider particular matters. Nonetheless, the report reveals the constant increase in the volume and scope of the Council's activities.

Once again, Africa occupies a prominent place in its programme of work, as does the situation in the Middle East. With regard to Africa, Venezuela believes that the issues of peace and security are interdependent with and inseparable from those of development and social justice. We are convinced that conflicts must be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, taking into account not only the security dimension, but also other variables.

We are concerned to see that underlying economic, social and political conditions that aggravate or create conflicts remain unchanged when an armed conflict appears to be headed towards a solution. That is why international cooperation to deal with the economic and social problems of the African continent must be sustained. There must be supportive and sustained cooperation, not handouts, to help meet the urgent needs of citizens in the areas of health, education and employment, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.

Peacekeeping operations are certainly a valuable means of helping to resolve conflicts. However, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, such operations should be deployed on the basis of the requirements essential for their proper functioning, such as the consent of the parties involved in the conflict, impartiality in carrying out their mandates and the non-use of force except in self-defence. Such operations cannot assume the functions of a peace-imposition force; their activities must abide strictly by the purposes and principles of the Charter, including full respect for national sovereignty, non-intervention in States' internal affairs and the self-determination of peoples.

Unfortunately, in recent years, peacekeeping missions have carried out tasks that go beyond their nature by assuming reconstruction functions. Such activities are the responsibility of the authorities and peoples affected. Moreover, there have been increasing reports of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by personnel of such missions. The Council must take all of that into account when it decides on and reviews the mandates of peacekeeping missions.

Venezuela firmly supports all resolutions reaffirming the principles that should form the basis for a peaceful and equitable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — a settlement that will lead to a stable and lasting peace in the Middle East region. In that connection, we believe that the full realization of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people is essential. My country continues to wonder why the Palestinians are paying for crimes of Nazi barbarism.

Last August, the Security Council adopted, with curious urgency, two resolutions aimed at preventing alleged potential threats to international peace and security but took four weeks to take action on the real and grave situation in Lebanon. Those four weeks made it possible — with astonishing Council inaction — to carry out a slaughter of civilians and to destroy installations, infrastructure and other targets, including civilian targets. More recently, we again witnessed Council inaction in the face of new violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as in the 8 November massacre at Beit Hanoun. Faced by this inaction by the Council — owing to the veto of one of its permanent members — the General Assembly had to shoulder its responsibilities in the area of international peace and security by resuming its tenth emergency special session to address the issue and to take measures in that regard.

The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, if, for one reason or another, it does not assume its responsibility in due course, the General Assembly must act with the necessary urgency, in accordance with the authority given it by the Charter. We would thus be contributing, under unfortunate circumstances, to the democratization of the United Nations.

The maintenance of international peace and security is based on the premise that relations among States, irrespective of their ideological, cultural or political differences, should be governed by strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and respect for international law. We reject the use of violence as a means of settling conflicts.

Self-defence and proportionality are not legally dissociable concepts. The first is a justification, and the second is an element of the former. There can be no self-defence without proportionality, because, if excesses are committed in the context of defensive action, then the use of force ceases to be legitimate and becomes aggression dissociated from any prior occurrence.

Venezuela is also particularly interested in the situation of the sisterly Republic of Haiti. We recognize the progress made as a result of the elections held on the island and the contribution that this process has made to bringing peace to that Caribbean country. We are happy to see that the Haitian people, given the opportunity to do so, have once again chosen the path of democracy and social justice. We believe that to achieve the stabilization of the Haitian political situation, it is important to ensure the economic and social development of the Haitian people. For that reason, we are carrying out cooperation programmes with Haiti in consultation with its authorities.

My country attaches particular importance to reform of the United Nations, a process that is necessary given the urgent need to democratize the Organization. In that context, we support the speedy reform of the Security Council as an essential part of the overall reform process, so as to make more representative of the international community and of current geopolitical realities, and giving it a greater sense of legitimacy and democracy, as set out in the Millennium Declaration.

Venezuela wishes to reiterate that the membership of the Security Council should be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, so as to achieve greater and better representation on the part of the developing countries. However, Security Council reform should not be limited to an increase in its membership. It is important also to deal with other issues such as its agenda, its working methods and its decision-making process.

The Security Council must improve its working methods to increase participation by States that are non-members of the Council, enhance its accountability and increase the transparency of its work. Private meetings should be held only when absolutely necessary, and more public and open debates should be convened so that the views and contributions of non-member States can be heard. It has become customary for Council members to take decisions immediately following the statements made by non-member States. However, the Council should first hear those views, then hold consultations to take account of what it has heard, and only then should decisions be taken.

The Council should focus its agenda on problems that truly relate to threats to international peace and security and should avoid addressing questions that could represent an encroachment on the competences of other United Nations bodies. In that connection, any decision by the Council to hold formal or informal debates on the situation of a particular State Member of the United Nations or on any question that does not represent a threat to international peace and security is in violation of Article 24 of the Charter. Moreover, the Council should invoke Chapter VII of the Charter only as a last resort and should not turn to it for items that do not necessarily represent an immediate threat to international peace and security.

Moreover, the indiscriminate use of sanctions has had an adverse impact on the peoples of the countries on which such sanctions are imposed and has negatively affected the human rights of their citizens. Sanctions should be imposed as a last resort in a limited number of situations, once diplomatic means have been exhausted, and they should be lifted once their objectives have been achieved. We are concerned at the fact that on occasion the Council has, under pressure, adopted sanctions in situations that do not necessarily represent a threat to international peace and security and has resorted to the provisions of Articles 41 and 42 of the Charter in a premature manner, without having exhausted the measures at its disposal for the peaceful settlement of disputes. That trend must be reversed if the legitimacy of the Security Council is to be strengthened.

Venezuela believes that in the process of democratizing the United Nations, the veto must be eliminated. Until the ultimate objective of eliminating the veto is achieved, formulas must be devised to limit and minimize its use, including mechanisms whereby the use of the veto can be avoided. It is unacceptable that opposition by only one State Member out of 192 can prevent the United Nations from taking action on issues that have a bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security, as has occurred with respect to the situation in the Middle East, particularly concerning recent attacks by Israeli soldiers against Palestine and Lebanon.

Venezuela would like to see the Security Council exercise its responsibility to achieve effective solutions to international conflicts by ensuring respect for international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to achieving peace, which is the fundamental objective of the Organization and of the international community, on the basis of social justice and democracy.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I would like to join the others who spoke before me in thanking Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, the Security Council's current President, for presenting the report of the Security Council. For my delegation, which will assume its functions as an elected member of the Council next month, this report is indeed food for thought.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for offering us the opportunity of this debate on Security Council reform, a debate which, as rightly pointed out in your letter dated 1 December, should be inspired by a fresh and open-minded approach.

Along those same lines, you yourself, Madam President, said yesterday that

> "the time has come for us to make a realistic assessment of the whole issue. In so doing, we should be prepared to look at this matter with fresh and open minds so that we can make substantial progress." (*See A/61/PV.72*)

I would like to express here my gratitude to the co-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Bethel of the Bahamas and Ambassador Majoor of the Netherlands, for the outstanding contribution that they have made, on which we will have to build.

Madam President, I am convinced that if we want to finally achieve results after decades of debates, we should indeed try to take, as you have said, an innovative and fresh approach in building on the common ground of what is of fundamental importance for all the membership. There is certainly a great deal of common ground, if we look at the expectations of the membership — and we have heard about this yesterday and today — of greater representativity, so as to bring about a different and more equitable balance of power, greater ownership, greater transparency, greater accountability, more appropriate working methods, more efficiency and effectiveness, more regional empowerment, and so on.

This debate and its follow-up should hopefully provide you, Madam President, with some useful creative input and some conceptual and political building blocks that will allow us, in the months — not years — ahead, to finally engage, under your guidance, with pragmatism and creativity, in successful negotiations towards a reform of the Security Council that will be non-divisive and therefore will not weaken the Organization because it will be supported by the widest possible agreement within the membership. There should be no winners and losers. All should feel that they are on board. No one should feel that they are being left out. All should feel comfortable.

There can be no doubt that we need and want an early Security Council reform, as was highlighted by our leaders at the 2005 Summit.

But there is also no doubt that what we need and want is a good reform. We cannot take a risk. It has to be clear to all of us that in this kind of exercise there are no rehearsals. We cannot afford the luxury of a gamble. We need, as I said, a good reform. And reform will be good if it improves on what we have today. Reform will be good — and this will be the main benchmark — if it strengthens ownership by the membership, bearing in mind, by the way, the fact that small States make up more than half of the membership and that the Security Council, according to the Charter, is supposed to act on their behalf too, as was recalled by many who spoke here yesterday.

Ownership by the membership should be ownership in defining the composition of the Council, ownership of its proceedings and ownership of its outcomes. That is why we need reform of the Security Council to be comprehensive in both clusters: enlargement and working methods. On the latter aspect, let me just recall the point so forcefully and rightly made yesterday by the Permanent Representatives of Switzerland, Ambassador Maurer, and of Liechtenstein, Ambassador Wenaweser. Let me also recall the importance of the Security Council Working Group on procedure, led by our colleague from Japan. We must continue to build on that.

If we succeed in addressing, through reform, the ownership deficit — and that is the point; there is an ownership deficit — then the result will be a strengthening of the credibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. We will have more implementation, more concrete results and more achievements. The problem today is that Member States feel that they are being marginalized — we are being marginalized. They feel that they do not have a real say, and that brings frustration, demotivation, disengagement and reluctance to commit and comply. Member States do not feel that they are on board. As you, Madam, said in the opening statement of your presidency, the United Nations is "an Organization of hope that is based on commitment, consensus and coexistence" (*A/61/PV.1, p. 3*). That is precisely what it is all about.

The reality of today is that the feelings and perceptions of being "out of business" are undermining the very foundations of the United Nations system. Let us address those feeling and perceptions before it is too late.

How do we proceed from here? First, I feel that we should not allow the current favourable momentum for reform to fade. There is, I feel, a window of opportunity that we should not allow to close. It is a window of opportunity that was highlighted and brought to the attention of the entire membership during an event on 20 September hosted by President Musharraf and President Prodi — an event that you, Madam, honoured with your presence. "Fresh"; "innovative"; "results-oriented approach"; "open mind": those were the key words of the event.

Of course, as has rightly been made clear by the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Ronaldo Sardenberg, we should avoid starting from scratch. In fact, the results of previous debates offer us important starting points for this last mile of the process — always the most difficult one. I am referring, in particular, to what the Open-ended Working Group managed to achieve during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, after three formal meetings and nine sessions of informal consultations — that is, the set of elements included in annex IV of the report contained in document A/58/47. Those elements could certainly offer us a useful platform to guide our new efforts in exploring the various options with — in the words of President Musharraf — "political flexibility and diplomatic creativity".

Secondly, in embarking on this new and innovative path we should avoid making what I believe would be the mistake of first working out, within each grouping, the more or less new model of our choice, and only then engage in negotiations. I think, and I feel, that it would be much better, and would more easily pave the way towards a successful outcome, if all of us engaged in the early stages of the process, trying together to build the various components of what could be a viable new model of reform. It is, I feel, much easier — even if difficult — to build together a new car in one factory than it is to negotiate a possible agreement in the choice and/or the mixing of different models of cars that are already being built, each in a different factory.

Thirdly, in order to facilitate such a process, in order to spark innovative and creative thinking, we will need a proper, conducive environment — an environment that, at the beginning of the process, should be as informal as possible so as to make everybody feel comfortable and enable them to dare to come up with new ideas. Our challenge is to allow such new ideas to emerge and compete, without fear of committing our Governments at this early stage. In fact, a lot of ideas are floating around, and I am sure that you, Madam, are well aware of their existence. Among these new ideas, let me just mention, as an example — and I am purposely taking this from outside the Uniting for Consensus basket — the ideas that have been floated by the Permanent Representative of Cyprus, Ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis, in his personal capacity. I think that we cannot afford the luxury of not discussing and working on such ideas and their potential added value before they either get lost in the process or become too rigid.

A few minutes ago our Indian colleague, Nirupam Sen, made a statement that was, as always, very brilliant, provocative and creative. He presented a tabula rasa of practically everything, and that is good — I always try to focus on the positive — because it means that we can build. Sometimes, as we know, it is much easier to build anew on bare ground than it is to adapt an old house to make it look nicer. He also said, among many other things, that we should first identify the problems that we want to address and then consider what remedies we are envisaging for addressing them. I think that those are very good criteria, which should guide us in our consultations. The point is that Ambassador Sen may be right in saying that all of the talk about rotation and elections and long duration is rubbish. But let us set those ideas against the problems that we have to address. Then perhaps we will conclude, and not merely say, that they are, in fact, inadequate. If I remember rightly, it was Ambassador Wenaweser who, speaking yesterday, said that at a certain point it is a question of religion, of belief. So if we get stuck at a certain point, it will then be up to us and our willingness to achieve a breakthrough, to go beyond our religious or ideological beliefs and make progress, even if we travel perhaps just two, three or four miles.

We have to shake the tree, but to do that, we have to have the proper setting. I do not think that this is the proper setting, at this stage, because here we are committed to the positions of our Governments, whereas we have to think freely. Maybe we can do it in this House, in the context of proper consultations, formal or informal, within the Open-ended Working Group or in any other format, provided the process is transparent, inclusive and open to all.

However, it might be more fruitful, at this early stage of harvesting, to hold brainstorming sessions — "pre-consultations", if you will — outside this House, with events that would, of course, be open to all of the membership. I have already explored this possibility with Columbia University and the United Nations Foundation. I do not foresee any major problem if the membership — that is, all of us and you, Madam President — wishes to go along with this idea and explore this path. Personally, I am in favour of it, because of its complete informality, transparency and inclusiveness.

On a final note, I would like to recall what Secretary-General Kofi Annan told us once again just a few days ago, that the two options before us at this stage are very clear. Either we choose to go on, year after year, fighting for the reform we believe is the best one for our national interests, or we choose a more pragmatic and incremental approach, and, without giving up our preferred ultimate model, we opt for a realistic type of reform that would be non-divisive and therefore politically viable and able to garner the support of the membership at large — a reform that, being non-divisive, will certainly benefit the Organization. Let us work out which is our preferred option.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I wish to endorse the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Cuba, who spoke in this debate on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to supplement his statement with a few additional thoughts on these two items, which are of great importance, and to reiterate our position thereon.

Secondly, I wish to thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the

State of Qatar, for his introduction, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of December, of the annual report of the Security Council.

While there is a clear connection between the two items that we are discussing today jointly, we would like to reiterate our belief that the report of the Security Council is sufficiently important to merit consideration on its own, particularly at this time, when we are seeking new ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the principal organs of our Organization.

Consideration of the annual report of the Security Council by the General Assembly is a good opportunity for a large number of Members of the Organization to evaluate the work and performance of the Council during the period under consideration, in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter of the United Nations. Those articles stipulate that the General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Security Council and that these reports shall include an account of the measures that the Council has decided to implement to maintain international peace and security.

Moreover, the report of the Council provides all Member States with an opportunity to assess the ever-broader work of the Council in dealing with the various international issues within its competence. Accordingly, those States that are not members of the Council should consider carefully ways of enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness.

Thus the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly should be more than a symbolic or ritual undertaking. It should be a substantive document, not a mere formality. It is not enough, in other words, that it have only the minimum characteristics necessary for it to be called a report. Indeed, it is only a sketchy outline that lacks any details concerning the votes taken. The report should be the principal nexus between the two bodies. Above all, given the close relationship between the maintenance of peace and all the other functions performed by the United Nations, the report should be a working instrument that enables the General Assembly to play its role as the principal deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations.

Guatemala appreciates the efforts made to improve significantly the key features of the document. However, the report is still primarily a descriptive, routine compilation of documents, focusing on a chronological account of what the Council does and what takes place at its public meetings. Unfortunately, it does not include any assessment of the difficulties, the progress, the setbacks, the obstacles and the challenges that occurred in the context of the efforts made by the Council to resolve conflicts that threaten international peace and security.

Moreover, this year once again we must deplore the fact that the report was submitted to us just a few days before this important debate, which does not contribute to producing the real analysis and evaluation we had hoped for.

My delegation has noted that the Council has dealt with a broad range of issues during the period under consideration, which reaffirms the trend of recent years whereby the volume and scope of the activities of the Council have increased. A total of 257 meetings were held, 81 resolutions were adopted, and 65 presidential statements were issued. That in and of itself means that it is particularly important that there be transparency in the Council's procedures. Taking into account the far-reaching consequences of the Council's decisions, Members must know which decisions are being taken by the Council and why. While some improvements have taken place with the passage of time, very few practical and effective mechanisms have been adopted for interaction with the Council on key issues.

On the other hand, we welcome the trend towards an increased number of public meetings, and we are pleased that this is becoming strengthened. We welcome the growing practice of sending missions to the field, such as the one sent to Central Africa and to Ethiopia and Eritrea in November 2005, and the one to the Sudan and Chad in June 2006. We believe that this is a way of understanding the actual situation in its true context and dimensions by obtaining clear information directly. This makes it possible to take better decisions and to find appropriate solutions to each situation.

Moreover, we share the view that the holding of thematic debates is useful in enhancing the effectiveness of the Council. Guatemala has participated actively in such public thematic discussions because we believe that they are a way for members of the Council and Members of the United Nations in general to express their views and make suggestions on matters directly related to the work of the Council. However, it is still not clear whether the Council takes fully into account those views when it takes its decisions.

As mentioned earlier, my delegation has witnessed a gradual increase in both the volume and the scope of the work of the Security Council. In that connection, we share the growing concern as to the gradual encroachment of the Security Council on the competence of the General Assembly. Over time, a trend has emerged whereby the Security Council holds debates on questions that traditionally are considered by other United Nations bodies. Thematic debates can be useful only if they are directly related to the mandate of the Council.

My delegation values in particular the work done by the Council on matters directly related to its mandate. It is vital, however, that its members act in strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and resist any attempt to address questions that do not pose a real threat to international or regional peace and security.

With regard to equitable representation on the Council, we join in the call that we get beyond the impasse in the discussions on reform. The parameters of the debate are well known. Historically, we have spoken in favour of a moderate increase in the non-permanent membership, but more recently we have indicated that we could live with any formula that enjoys consensus.

Guatemala is firmly committed to the process of United Nations reform as set forth in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). The question of reform of the United Nations system has been one of those which have generated the most debate in recent months in this Assembly. However, we still do not see any significant progress with regard to the reform of the Security Council. We acknowledge the timid steps taken on some points presented at the time through the initiative of the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5).

We view Security Council reform as a necessary element but always connected to a broader process: reform of the Organization. A collective security system necessarily requires the integrated strengthening of multilateralism and of the United Nations. Therefore, we continue to maintain that Council reform should not be focused only on the question of increasing the membership, but should also deal in an integrated way with the review of the working methods and the decision-making process. I wish to reiterate my delegation's belief in the need for the Security Council to be more legitimate, to have greater transparency and to be more effective to cope with the challenges facing the international community today.

Guatemala favours the continued open and accessible functioning of the Council, with a view to greater transparency, so that, in accordance with the Charter, it may truly act on behalf of Member States and thus in the interest of the international community, with the constant valuable contribution of all interested States. We support the idea of a strengthened approach to improved coordination among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, so as to guarantee continuity in the work of the Organization, with a view to ensuring the maintenance and strengthening of peace, safeguarding the particular responsibilities and powers of each United Nations organ, in accordance with the Charter.

Lastly, Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to participate actively in future discussions on this question.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I address this Assembly a few hours after the death of the person who governed Chile during a long and dark period of my country. A sad chapter in Chile's history has thus come to a close, so that we can, from this point on, look towards the future.

It is precisely the future that brings us here today. Chile has been an determined participant in an in-depth reform of the United Nations which would reaffirm the principles and values of its Charter and thus increase its legitimacy. That is why we should not continue deferring the challenge of reforming the Security Council and should focus not only on the necessary expansion of this body, but also on improving its methods of work.

For this reason, Chile reaffirms what was said by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and also the recommendation in paragraph 154 of the 2005 Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), that the

> "Security Council [should] continue to adapt its working methods so as to increase the involvement of States not members of the Council in its work, as appropriate, enhance its

accountability to the membership and increase the transparency of its work".

Similarly, our country seeks a renewal of the Security Council that would make it more representative, transparent and effective. We need a more democratic and efficient Security Council in order to strengthen its credibility.

Chile once again reaffirms its support for the aspiration of Brazil and other countries to occupy permanent seats in a reformed Security Council, while maintaining its historical opposition to the veto. That is consistent with the fundamental value we attach to the principle of the legal equality of States and the democratization of international organizations. Thus, ever since the establishment of the United Nations, and throughout the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, my country has maintained its opposition to the veto.

Chile will always be ready to contribute to the building of consensus necessary to a comprehensive reform of the Organization, and of the Security Council in particular. Chile favours an effort of compromise and agreement, which is consistent with our policy in dealing with matters that divide us. The Organization can count on our commitment and support. We cannot lose the opportunity to change the present rigidity of the debate on the Security Council so that we can improve the Council and make it more democratic.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): Permit me first of all, Madam President, to welcome your initiative in convening this meeting today for a joint debate on the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and on the reform of the Security Council.

On the report (A/61/2) introduced this morning by the representative of Qatar as President of the Council, we think that this exercise is doubly important. First, it is important for the Security Council itself in that it enables it to evaluate the ground it has covered over the course of a year. But it is also — and particularly — important for the Member States at large, as an opportunity to enter into a genuine dialogue within the General Assembly on the way in which the Security Council has been discharging the mission conferred upon it by the Charter. Such a dialogue is essential and makes a most useful contribution to the work of the Council.

I turn now to Security Council reform. As members know, France is committed to comprehensive reform, with regard both to its composition and to its working methods. On the latter, its working methods, it must be said that real progress has been made this year. Thus, the presidential note (S/2006/507) adopted last July after several months of collective hard work made it possible to make progress on a certain number of specific subjects, although they have not yet all been addressed. Among them I would highlight increased transparency in the work of the Security Council and of its subsidiary bodies, the degree of consultation with States concerned in regional crises and the importance of involving regional organizations.

France believes, however, that reform of the United Nations and of the Security Council would be incomplete without expansion of the Council. Here, opposition to change is not an option. Given that the Council's Charter responsibilities demand that it intensify its activities, we must enhance its authority by adapting its composition to the realities of today's world. Expanding the Council's composition would also enable it to be more effective, because the implementation of its decisions requires increasing human, financial and logistical commitment on the part of the international community.

For its part, France continues to support the plan submitted last year by the Group of Four, which we believe is best able to meet the challenges, particularly through an expansion in both membership categories. In that context, we continue to fully support the aspirations of Germany, Japan, India and Brazil to become permanent members and Africa's demand to have its rightful place in such reform.

Last July's debate here in the General Assembly revealed a new readiness on the part of Member States to make progress on this issue. While we are aware of the continuing impasse in the negotiations, France is prepared to discuss with anyone at any time, transparently and openly, the crucial issue of Security Council reform.

Reform of the Security Council, given its responsibilities, is essential and urgent. The promoters of such reform know that they can always count on the active involvement of France.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations

A/61/PV.75

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

75th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 12 December 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa .... (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sow (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 9 and 111 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/61/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Towpik (Poland): I believe that this debate on reform of the Security Council is taking place in new and more favourable circumstances. Let me stress the following points in particular.

First, our efforts in reforming the United Nations have led to important results. The establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and the changes made in the Economic and Social Council all prove that progress is feasible, even on complex and sensitive issues. It is clearly an encouraging sign as concerns efforts related to Security Council reform.

Secondly, our thinking on Security Council reform has become deeper and, I would say, more mature. Several drafts of a solution have been presented. Their advantages and disadvantages have been extensively considered. The discussions have become more comprehensive. We have been debating not only the expansion of the membership of the Security Council but also possible changes in its working methods. Such changes are intended, inter alia, to expand the involvement of non-members and regional organizations in the work of the Council and to increase the transparency of its work and enhance its effectiveness.

Thirdly, during the previous session of the General Assembly we had good, rich and useful exchanges of views on this issue, in the framework of both the Open-ended Working Group on the question of Security Council reform and in the General Assembly. In particular, we noted with satisfaction the broad scope of the discussion and its constructive spirit, which dominated the July debate in the General Assembly.

The debate also seemed to indicate that the various proposals that had been previously put forward were not necessarily mutually incompatible. Those who presented drafts were encouraged to enter into consultations among themselves.

Fourthly, both during the July debate and in later declarations, a new approach to the problem emerged. It was suggested that, given both the complexity of the problem and the urgent need for progress, we could also explore the idea of intermediate or transitional steps which could gradually lead us to a resolution of the problem.

Thus in recent years we have seen a proliferation of various initiatives on the question of Security Council reform. Today, the dominant feeling seems rather to be the need to bring together those initiatives

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and to try to find a solution that may be acceptable to the majority of the Members of the United Nations.

In that spirit, I would like to offer a few comments relating to how my delegation sees the purpose of this debate and its possible follow-up.

First, we see this debate as the resumption of a dialogue on a difficult but unavoidable and important part of United Nations reform. At the beginning of the debate, the President of the Assembly stressed that "we should be prepared to look at this matter with fresh and open minds" (see A/61/PV.72). And, indeed, we hope that the debate will be resumed with goodwill and with the determination to find an acceptable solution.

We also believe that the reform of the Security Council should cover both its composition and its working methods. The two processes — Security Council expansion and the improvement and development of its methods of work — even if they are dealt with on separate tracks, are mutually complementary. Each can facilitate the finding of a solution for the other and help move forward the reform of the Security Council as a whole.

The changes in the methods of work of the Security Council should lead to closer cooperation on the part of the members of the Security Council with non-members and regional organizations, to greater transparency in its activities, and, in the end, to greater accountability on the part of Security Council members.

We welcomed the July results of the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (see S/2006/507). We also noted with appreciation the work and the draft of the so-called group of five small nations – the "Small Five" (S-5). Their ideas and proposals undoubtedly inspired the discussions in the Security Council Working Group and remain an important guideline for further endeavours in this direction.

When approaching the problem of the two categories of membership of the Council, we should first of all base ourselves on the philosophy underlying the provisions of the Charter relating to the Security Council. That philosophy, which is still valid, is that the presence in the Council of the major world actors and contributors to the United Nations and their cooperation are not only desirable but necessary if the Council is to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

At the same time, we believe that the membership of the Council should better reflect the broader membership of the whole United Nations and that it should represent all regions. This relates to both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the Security Council. In this process of adjustment of the membership, no regional group should be a loser. This applies in particular to the Eastern European Group, whose membership has doubled in recent years.

The idea of reviewing — after a defined period of time — solutions that can be agreed upon now has already found a broad level of approval. The commitment to such a review will ensure that we do not create a kind of eternal structure. To the contrary, we envisage possible changes of circumstances and the possible adaptation of today's decisions to unpredictable future developments. The non-extension of the veto power to new members of the Council would guarantee that we do not create new obstacles on the way to such adaptation.

Allow me to conclude with the following observations. We strongly believe that, while dealing with an old problem, we are at a new and more promising stage of the debate. We have not yet overcome all of our difficulties, but a kind of middle ground in our thinking about the problem is gradually expanding, and new ideas have emerged which require our careful consideration. All of this allows us to take a step forward. The only question I have is, "After this discussion, what then?"

I believe that we should not lose the momentum that we have gained in this debate. Thus, it would be helpful if the President of the Assembly would encourage and organize further informal and limited discussion on this issue and request the Co-Chairmen of the Working Group on Security Council reform to undertake such consultations and, as promptly as possible, report back to the General Assembly.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): I would like first and foremost to thank the President for having convened this joint debate and for her words of encouragement regarding Security Council reform expressed at the beginning of our deliberations. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Qatar, the current President of the Security Council, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his introduction of the report of the Security Council for the period 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006 (A/61/2).

I will focus my statement on the two agenda items that are before us today. Under the report of the Security Council, I would like to highlight the issue of Timor-Leste. During the period covered by the report, Timor-Leste experienced a serious deterioration in its political and security situation. The international community reacted promptly, acknowledging that its sustained support was paramount to ensuring that Timor-Leste would continue to progress on the path of the consolidation of its sovereign institutions.

Portugal, along with other partners and with the support of the Security Council, responded to the request for emergency assistance in the security field formulated by the Timorese authorities. At the same time, the Secretary-General and the Security Council undertook a comprehensive assessment of the situation on the ground and a review of the international approach to Timor-Leste. This process led to a strengthened engagement by the United Nations, through the adoption of Security Council resolution 1704 (2006) and the establishment of the United Nations Mission Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT).

Major tasks lie ahead in the fields of national reconciliation and dialogue, security sector reform, economic recovery and institution-building in key areas such as justice, rule of law and human rights. Priority attention must also be paid to the preparation of the forthcoming 2007 elections.

Portugal will continue to lend its full support and contribution to United Nations efforts. We welcome the recent appointment of Mr. Atul Khare as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and we look forward to the full deployment of UNMIT and to sustained support from the United Nations to Timor-Leste. Also, and as the major bilateral donor to Timor-Leste, Portugal will continue to pursue its cherished partnership with this young but promising country.

Allow me now to say a few words on Security Council reform. I would like to begin by commending the work and efforts of the two Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, Ambassador Paulette Bethel of the Bahamas and Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands.

Since the 2005 World Summit, several important measures and decisions have been adopted in the reform process for our Organization. Much has been done, but one major issue remains to be addressed, namely, Security Council reform. We must not lose sight of the mandate entrusted to us by our leaders in September 2005 when they agreed to "support early reform of the Security Council — an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*).

Although momentum on this issue is not at its greatest, statements by delegations yesterday and today prove that belief in the need for Security Council reform is shared by almost all Members of this Assembly. And just last week, the Secretary-General urged us, once again, not to delay action on Security Council reform. This demonstrates that maintaining the status quo is not an option that would serve this Organization and that the more the reform process advances the more a sense of lack of accomplishment regarding Security Council reform becomes apparent.

The Portuguese positions on Security Council reform are on record and were reiterated before this Assembly in the debate that took place in July. At this stage, I would just like to recall one point, namely, that according to Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council acts on behalf of the Organization's Members.

There are a number of consequences that derive from this assertion. As for membership, I would stress that the legitimate aspirations for accession to the Security Council by medium-sized and small countries, which comprise the vast majority of the United Nations membership, must be taken into account. Therefore, we remain wary of proposals that would make it almost impossible for medium-sized and small countries to serve in the Security Council.

We believe that, at this stage, we should reflect on how to proceed and move the issue forward. We need to engage on a path that would set the conditions for substantial progress during the current session of the General Assembly. As we all know, the task is difficult, but difficulty must not be an excuse to postpone issues that are vital for the credibility and efficiency of the Organization.

Portugal continues to believe that transparent and inclusive negotiations based on principles, values and criteria are susceptible to making Security Council reform a reality. Strong political input and commitment by our leaders, incentives by the President of the Assembly and support from the Secretary-General would significantly raise the chances of a successful outcome. Portugal stands ready to contribute to such a process.

Mr. Chem (Cambodia): I would like to express my sincere thanks to the President of the General Assembly for allowing me to speak on these two important agenda items, namely, "Report of the Security Council" and "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". I would like to join other delegations in thanking Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for this month, for his presentation of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly as contained in document A/61/2.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered to the Assembly by Ambassador Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz, Permanent Representative of Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

With regard to United Nations reform, in recent years it has been clear that every State Member of this world body wants the United Nations to be reformed. However, when the opportunity was provided to effect reform, we encountered a deadlock on this very important issue because too much emphasis was placed on the reform of the Security Council alone.

In this regard, I believe we should learn from the present lesson and try to avoid repeating this mistake in the future. In other words, we should take a step-by-step approach by first tackling such minor problems as strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council to deal with issues of development, since such an approach is less controversial and since there is more inclination to support that type of reform. Next, we should consider revitalizing the General Assembly as the sole body comprised of representatives of all States Members of the United Nations. Afterwards, we could move forward to the reform of the Security Council. We have to start first with issues where consensus can be easily obtained, and then move on to the more difficult ones, thereby avoiding a complete stalemate in the United Nations reform process.

My words here are not a call for the reform of the Security Council to be neglected. We have faced difficulties to advance reform since our discussion in the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. Since then, there has been a lot of rhetoric on the subject of reform, but no real practical progress. It remains of great importance, however, that the complex issue of Security Council reform should be tackled in a comprehensive, transparent and balanced manner.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Once again, we meet to discuss two reports — one from the Security Council, reporting on its work for the year 2005-2006, and the other from the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council.

Before engaging those reports, allow me to thank Ambassador Al-Nasser of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the month of December, and Ambassadors Bethel of the Bahamas and Majoor of the Netherlands, who are the current co-facilitators for the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform.

My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the Ambassador of Niger on behalf of the Group of African States.

My delegation has noted that, in both reports before us today, there is little new. The Security Council report continues to provide a factual recount of its activities during the year, despite the calls from the United Nations general membership for an analytical report.

We welcome the role of the Security Council in the resolution of conflicts in the world, particularly in Africa. The transition from conflict to peace in such countries as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and, recently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is testimony to what the Security Council can achieve when it assumes its responsibilities.

We remain concerned, however, that for more than 50 years, the Security Council has not succeeded in bringing about any positive change in the situation between Israel and Palestine. The failure of the Council to find a lasting solution to that crisis has denied hope to millions of Palestinian people. Even the Israelis cannot be satisfied or even feel safe surrounded by conflict. If the Council continues to fail to give hope to the people of the Middle East, that can only lead to some engaging in violence and counter-violence, which does not help anyone or any party. We urge the Security Council to act decisively and to assume its Charter responsibility by working urgently to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. My delegation is among those that have always reiterated that peace between the Palestinians and Israelis will come when there are two States existing side by side and with secure and well-defined borders — the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

My delegation is also among those that were particularly perturbed by the Council's delay in addressing the military incursions into Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank in June and July of this year. While the Council was stalled in non-action, many innocent civilians lost their lives and critical infrastructure was destroyed. The Council must transcend the divisions and national interests among its members and speak with one voice on urgent situations, or face the erosion of its credibility as an organ mandated to maintain international peace and security on behalf of all of us.

On a promising note, we welcome the improvements reported in the working methods of the Security Council, contained in document S/2006/507. We acknowledge that this is an effort to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the Council's work. While those are modest measures, they remain meaningful steps towards improving the work of the Council. The challenge is ensuring that those measures are implemented and made permanent. The General Assembly should hold the Council accountable for the implementation of the measures it recommended for itself. However, we will be more pleased when those reforms become permanent so that the Security Council can have predictable rules that can be followed by everyone.

Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter envisages situations in which the Security Council may utilize regional organizations by virtue of their proximity to and knowledge of a particular conflict. With the end of the cold war, regional organizations are increasingly becoming essential building blocks in the global security system. Regional organizations are better placed to deal with peace and security challenges in their respective regions. For the effective functioning of the United Nations system, it is important that the United Nations and its agencies be able to delegate responsibilities and provide the necessary resources, where required, in support of the efforts of regional organizations. South Africa strongly believes that the Security Council may soon have to define in clear terms how it can utilize regional organizations that are ready to assist in making the world a safer place.

The regional organizations are well placed to intervene sooner than the Security Council's processes of deliberation would allow. It is in that conviction that my delegation welcomes the current discussions for African Union-United Nations cooperation in Darfur, and we urge the parties to expeditiously explore that possibility so as to facilitate the alleviation of the suffering of the people of Darfur.

The United Nations Charter has placed significant responsibility in the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. That responsibility gives the Council a far-reaching impact on the lives of many people in the world. That therefore gives urgency to the efforts to expand and transform the Security Council.

The Open-ended Working Group was established because Member States recognized the need to reform the Council. However, since its establishment, the Working Group has remained deadlocked, particularly on the vital issue of enlarging the Security Council in the permanent and non-permanent categories. It has met continuously for more than a decade without producing any concrete recommendations on the way forward. In other words, the Working Group has become a forum for endless debate.

Thus, when the heads of State and Government met at a Summit held in New York last year and took a decision to intensify the efforts to resolve that issue as part of the overall reform of the United Nations, they were aware of the futile discussions in the Open-ended Working Group. By requesting the General Assembly to find common ground on that matter, the Summit recognized that the Working Group had outlived its usefulness and that a new reality had to come into being.

My delegation believes that what is now needed in place of the discredited Open-ended Working Group is a mechanism to negotiate and find a way to bridge the differences on the enlargement of Security Council. We as Member States have the responsibility to ensure that the Security Council remains the universal repository of our efforts in the maintenance of peace and security by taking that bold step to reform it. The time has come to arrest the erosion of the Council's credibility and to seek agreement on the composition and working methods of a reformed Council. My delegation believes that the reform of the Security Council is possible. All we need is for Member States to engage in serious negotiations about creating a Council that will serve us all in the context of the new geopolitical realities. We have to stop pretending that the status quo is acceptable to everyone. That is the least that people in all regions of the world expect us to do at this sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the President of the General Assembly for the initiative to convene this meeting to consider in a joint debate the report of the Security Council (A/61/2) and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

El Salvador notes with concern the progressive deterioration in international peace and security and the emergence of new and increasingly complex potential sources of conflict in various parts of the world. That reaffirms the urgent need to adapt the multilateral bodies responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security to the current multipolar reality.

Since the 2005 World Summit, the international community has focused its debates on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council on two possible models for Council reform. Those models have also been the subject of countless discussions and negotiations, but neither of them has prevailed thus far.

That situation, however, does not diminish the value of the opportunities that have arisen during the international community's interaction to consider and promote these models. New ideas have emerged and elements for consideration have been consolidated regarding pragmatic options. Nevertheless, we need to recognize the limits of such interaction, because at this point the arguments of both sides have been exhausted. That shows the urgent need to promote comprehensive reform of the Security Council to make it open, democratic and transparent in the eyes of all Member States, also taking into account its working methods.

El Salvador believes that the incoming Secretary-General will have the enormous task of leading a new cycle of debates on comprehensive Security Council reform from a more pragmatic perspective, addressing those aspects that appear to have been recognized by all Member States as essential components that will enable us to achieve such reform.

El Salvador is convinced that comprehensive Security Council reform is a responsibility shared by all United Nations Members, not the privilege of a few. For that reason, it is worthwhile to recall a number of aspects of the debate begun at the 2005 World Summit, including the concept of permanent, rotating regional representation and the notion of permanent seats assigned to regional groups, whose representatives could be chosen by each of the existing regional groups in accordance with their own circumstances.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, our country believes that there is a new impetus for regional and subregional interaction and integration, which forms the basis for new leadership options to face shared development challenges. Therefore, El Salvador is prepared to support those options at the appropriate time.

Furthermore, it is essential that we continue considering ways to improve the Security Council's working methods. That is a topic for ongoing debate, and it can undoubtedly make a very positive contribution to comprehensive Council reform.

In conclusion, let me express once again my Government's willingness to continue considering the proposals that can be presented on this subject, given the urgent need to reform the Security Council in a comprehensive manner in order to respond to the new challenges and complexities of this century.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for introducing the annual report of the Council (A/61/2). I would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the delegation of France and to the Secretariat for their work in preparing their respective contributions.

The document before us encompasses a wide range of issues dealt with by the Security Council during the reporting period. There were many areas of focus, including Africa, the Middle East and

Afghanistan, which are covered in detail in the report. The serious and continuing threat to global peace and security posed by terrorism was another important agenda item, which has continued to be a primary focus of the Council.

Kazakhstan welcomes the Security Council's continuing efforts to address ongoing conflicts. We commend the efforts made by the Council to strengthen the role of the United Nations in creating a stable and secure environment. Kazakhstan believes that United Nations peacekeeping operations constitute one of the main elements of the maintenance of international peace and security. They are among the key instruments available to the Security Council in the settlement of conflicts and disputes.

The General Assembly and the Organization as a whole have recorded important achievements since the adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). They include the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission.

However, Kazakhstan shares the view that the failure to reform and expand the Security Council remains a glaring shortcoming. We fully recognize the importance of Council reform in overall reform of the United Nations, and we believe that such a sensitive issue should be addressed in a way that contributes to our common efforts to make the United Nations stronger, more efficient and better equipped to meet new challenges.

Our delegation shares the general view that the present composition of the Security Council does not sufficiently reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. We view with very great concern those instances that betray an inability on the part of the Council to respond in a timely and effective manner to emerging security concerns. In that regard, Kazakhstan supports reform based on principles that will ensure a more accurate reflection of global realities. We must enhance and revitalize the Security Council so that it can fully carry out its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Acknowledging that reform must make the Security Council more representative and effective and more accountable to the wider United Nations membership, Kazakhstan has repeatedly voiced its continued support for expanding the Security Council in the categories of both permanent and non-permanent seats. We are convinced that enlargement of the Security Council should be carried out in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical representation, taking into account the contributions of the States concerned to the development of the world economy and global security.

Kazakhstan attaches significant importance to the issues related to the working methods and practices of the Security Council. Our delegation fully supports the view that the Council should continue to adapt its working methods in order to make its work more transparent and more democratic, in a way that can better serve the interests of the entire membership of the Organization. In that context, we would like to emphasize the efforts made by the delegations of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland. Their proposals on the Security Council's working methods deserve our careful examination.

We also welcome the work being done by the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, which includes efforts to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the Council's work as well as to bring about stronger interaction and dialogue with the membership of the United Nations.

My delegation appeals to all Member States to work with great determination to make progress on the reform of the Security Council. We are convinced that a reformed Security Council that reflects the new political and economic realities of the world will continue to play an effective role as the principal United Nations organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me to express our appreciation to Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for this month, for introducing the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/61/2).

Despite the statistical and factual nature of the Security Council's reports to the General Assembly, submitted in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter, they provide Member States with useful and valid information on the volume and variety of the international peace and security issues that the Council deals with. It acts on behalf of the entire membership — hence the legitimacy of the Council's international resolutions.

Iraq inherited a number of issues from the previous regime that are still under consideration by the Council and which require review. First and foremost is the question of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). On more than one occasion, the Government of Iraq has called for a review of the UNMOVIC mandate with a view to terminating it, because the conditions that led to the Commission's establishment are no longer in existence.

Furthermore, the Commission has had no activity in Iraq since the fall of the previous regime. The Foreign Minister of Iraq spoke on this matter before the Security Council last June (see S/PV.5463). Similarly, the President of Iraq referred to the matter in his statement before the General Assembly at the current session (see A/61/PV.16). Our Prime Minister also confirmed this situation in his letter dated 11 November 2006 to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/888*). In addition, the final document adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement at its meeting in Havana last September also called for terminating the mandate of the mission. Iraq is hopeful that the Security Council will review UNMOVIC's mandate with a view to terminating it as soon as possible.

When we consider the various other questions considered by the Security Council, whether they be related directly to international peace and security or to have conditions affecting international peace and security, it is obvious how necessary the reform process in the United Nations is.

The most important aspects of Security Council reform involve increasing the membership of the Council in both of its categories, and improving the Council's working methods.

Increasing the membership of the Council has become important in the light of the great changes witnessed by the world since the establishment of the United Nations. The world's population has more than tripled since the establishment of the Organization. New States have come onto the scene; they have had a great impact on international relations and the global balance of power, and they greatly contribute to the activities of the United Nations in every field. That is why the Council should be expanded in a manner that makes it more representative, more democratic, more accountable and more transparent.

Yet it seems to us that the consultations on the proposals to expand the Council, which led in the latter part of the sixtieth session to the preparation of three draft resolutions on an increase in the membership, have reached the saturation point. This state of affairs compels my delegation to give priority to improving the working methods of the Council, since that issue touches upon the interests of the majority of States Members of the United Nations, and since there has been no increase in the membership since the General Assembly and its Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council began discussing the issue about 15 years ago.

Although we have achieved some progress in discussing new ideas about reform and its direction, we have failed to take firm decisions on implementing these ideas. The reason for this failure might be that we have allowed the question of improving the working methods of the Security Council to be held hostage to an increase in its membership. Therefore, we think it is high time to achieve concrete success on improving the working methods, particularly since this could be achieved without amending the Charter of the United Nations.

Moreover, past improvements to the Council's working methods have not been reflected in the rules of procedure of the Security Council, which have remained provisional since the establishment of the United Nations and which have not been amended for more than 20 years.

Accordingly, my delegation considers that the ideas contained in the draft resolution (A/60/L.49) of the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — deserve attention and study in order to give the Security Council reform process a strong impetus that could help us to take practical steps towards an increase in the membership.

I would like to focus on the following points related to improvement of the Council's working methods. First, we would hope to see expanded participation in Security Council meetings, including the participation of non-member States in closed consultations on issues relating to their fundamental interests. Article 31 of the Charter should be fully implemented, which would give rise to a more positive reflection of the principle of openness and transparency.

Secondly, we would like to give regional organizations a role in maintaining international peace and security and in preventing conflict. Such an approach requires full implementation of Chapter VIII of the Charter. While that approach does not affect the commitments and responsibilities of the Council, it would nevertheless enhance respect for and the protection of human rights.

Thirdly, sanctions regimes should be based on a balance between their effectiveness and the negative effects that sanctions have on civilian populations. We must ensure that the purpose of imposing sanctions is to rectify the mistakes of the targeted regime and not to destroy a State or its social structure. Sanctions regimes should target individuals, regimes and entities; they should not constitute collective punishment of peoples or countries.

Finally, the right of veto should be limited to matters under Chapter VII of the Charter; it should not be used in cases of genocide or grave violations of international humanitarian law.

Although the cornerstone of United Nations reform is Security Council reform, we hope that reform will take place throughout the Organization so that a balance can be created among the three principal organs of the United Nations, in accordance with the mandate enshrined in the Charter. The hope is that the Organization can truly lead the world in facing challenges to international peace, security and development.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for having convened this important meeting on the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. May I also add that my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Niger on behalf of Africa.

Let me also join my colleagues in thanking Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the month of December, for his detailed presentation of the report of the Security Council (A/61/2). The annual report provides an opportunity for members of our Organization to appreciate and assess the performance of the Council during the period under review.

My delegation has followed with keen interest and appreciation the efforts of the Security Council in promoting peace and stability in Africa, in particular in countries that are facing conflicts and humanitarian crises in the region.

We acknowledge that the Council's work is, by its very nature, complex. Indeed, the growing complexity of the Council's daily work stems from the fact that the current challenges exceed by far those posed by the classic pattern of inter-State conflict.

However, while noting the gradual broadening in both the volume and scope of the work of the Security Council, we share the growing concern about the gradual encroachment by the Security Council on the powers and mandate of the General Assembly. Over the years, there has been a growing tendency by the Security Council to hold discussions on thematic issues that were traditionally considered by other organs of the United Nations. It is therefore high time that we implement the relevant resolutions, which aim at facilitating appropriate accountability by the Security Council to the General Assembly. We also believe that, in order to improve the Council's transparency and accountability, there is an urgent need to formalize its rules of procedure, which remain provisional.

The failure of the Security Council to act in a timely and impartial manner in certain cases has, to say the least, drawn wide-ranging condemnation on the part of a large number of Member States, civil societies, non-governmental organizations and the rest of the international community. There are therefore valid reasons for a restructured and reformed Security Council that is able to meet the challenges posed by the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century — a Council with equitable representation that uses more efficient and effective methods in the conduct of its work, as called for by world leaders at the two Summits held so far during this Millennium.

It is not my intention to present long and exhaustive arguments as to the benefits of Security Council reform. Those have been sufficiently dealt with by Member States and by major stakeholders over the past 15 years. Suffice it to say that the 60-year-old Security Council has changed very little in terms of its working methods and representativeness, and, as such, is obviously not able to appropriately meet the needs or respond to the aspirations of an ever-changing world in terms of population growth, society, economy, culture and politics.

We all are aware that in 1945 Africa did not belong to the Africans and that most of Asia was not owned by the Asians. The same applies to the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Today we have 53 sovereign African States, 53 Asian States and 33 Latin American and Caribbean States. Fairness demands that these groups of countries be accorded their legitimate share in all the important global decision-making bodies, including the Security Council. That is absolutely essential to evolve the right mix of synergies so as to create harmony, peace and security in the world.

Before I proceed any further, allow me to seize this opportunity to commend Ms. Al-Khalifa's predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, who was also very keen on bringing the question of the reform of the Security Council to a successful conclusion. The general debate that took place on 20 July 2006, near the end of his tenure as President, more or less concluded that there could be no genuine United Nations reform without a restructured Security Council. Furthermore, an interesting outcome of that general debate was the fact that a large number of Member States, including developed and developing countries, landlocked and island States, and at least two permanent members of the Security Council favoured the so-called group of four proposal, which calls for permanent seats for Japan, Germany, Brazil and India, and they also gave support to the proposals made by the group of five small nations (S-5).

A large number of Member States, as well as many of those who support the group of four and S-5 proposals, also agreed that Africa needs to be represented in the Security Council as a permanent member. In that context, I would like here to reiterate the position of Mauritius as spelt out by the Prime Minister of Mauritius in his statement to the sixty-first plenary session of the General Assembly:

> "It is unacceptable that the African and Latin American and Caribbean regions are not represented in the permanent membership of the Security Council. It is also morally and politically unacceptable that the world's most populous democracy is still denied a seat as a permanent member of the Council. It is imperative that a reformed Security Council should include India among its permanent members". (*A/61/PV.16, pp. 12-13*)

We believe that the veto power is one of the crucial elements that is somehow preventing the expansion of the Security Council, particularly in the category of the permanent membership. It is generally pointed out that those that possess it want neither to part with it nor others to have it, too. However, it is evident that the misuse of veto power not only renders the Council ineffective and incapable in the face of urgent security and humanitarian crises, but also results in its being held hostage by a privileged few, to suit their own agendas. That is definitely not in the true spirit of multilateralism.

My delegation is therefore prepared to align itself with any proposal calling for the restricted use of the veto power and to limit its use to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

To conclude, my delegation, together with others, is ready to make its contribution to move forward the process of Security Council reform in terms of its expansion, equitable representation thereon and improvement in its working methods.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Allow me first to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the Security Council for this month, Ambassador Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar, for his lucid introduction of the annual report of the Security Council for the period 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006 (A/61/2).

We also welcome the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/60/47). I would like to associate my delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Niger on behalf of the African Group.

Once again, the report of the Council clearly reflects its busy schedule over the past year. As indicated in the report, during the period under review, the Council met in 259 formal meetings, of which 217 were public, in addition to holding 24 meetings with troop-contributing countries. During that period, the

Council adopted 81 resolutions and issued 65 presidential statements. The Council renewed 26 mandates, including those of peacekeeping operations, and created one new mandate. No mandates were terminated.

Equally important, in our view, is the partnership between the Security Council and regional organizations, since the regional dimension is quite often useful when dealing with conflicts. We deem the budding cooperation between the Council and the African Union to be useful and believe that it needs to be strengthened, particularly since most of the conflicts are in Africa. Since the Council spends 60 to 70 per cent of its time on Africa, we expect more from the Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

We also wish to commend the Council for dealing with country-specific issues, as well as for holding thematic debates, since both are necessary for the execution of the Council's mandate. The thematic debates provide occasions for in-depth consideration of topical issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. In view of the current conceptual understanding of security, we believe that the problem with the thematic debates relates not to the encroachment by the Council on the purview of other organs but to the implementation of the outcomes of those debates.

We have also found the Council's missions to areas of conflict — four of which were held during the period under review — to be very useful. Such visits enable the Council to gain an on-the-spot understanding of situations through engagement with local and other players.

Elsewhere, we wish to commend the Council for playing a pivotal role in the global campaign against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Counter-Terrorism Committee has been a shining example of transparency. It is our fervent hope that that achievement, which is worthy of emulation, will be reflected in the Council's dealings with Member States in other areas.

We also applaud the continued effort to further improve cooperation between the Council and troop-contributing countries, as reflected in the growing regularity and frequency of meetings in that area. My delegation believes that this consultative mechanism can be beneficial to all the parties involved in peacekeeping activities and to the United Nations as a whole. We appreciate the Council's interaction with civil society and non-governmental organizations in keeping with the Arria formula as a way of bridging the gap between Council members and the outside world.

It is our view that the Council, as the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should focus more attention on the Middle East problem, which poses the greatest threat to international peace and security.

Consideration of the report of the Security Council is taking place at a time in history when — because of the Iraqi problem, threats of nuclear proliferation and the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question — the eyes of the international community are focused on the role of the United Nations as the body with the collective responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Naturally, in the circumstances, the role of the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, comes to the fore.

The collective responsibility which forms part of the foundation of the United Nations demands the cooperation of all Member States. The Security Council cannot discharge this onerous responsibility effectively and legitimately unless its membership is truly representative and reflects the composition of this lofty Organization, which currently has a membership of 192.

We cannot seriously talk about United Nations reform without touching on its most important organ and the heartbeat of the system: the Security Council. Yet, 13 years since commencing discussions on the issue, we are nowhere near agreement. We cannot continue to discuss Security Council reform ad infinitum. We should rise above parochial interests, regional rivalries and jealousies to bring the discussions to closure.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the need to enhance the credibility of the Council through substantive reform guided by the principles of democracy, the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical representation. A reformed Security Council should be transparent in its activities and more responsive to the interests of the general membership in matters deriving from its mandate under the Charter. Advocacy for democratic governance and transparency should be applicable both at the national level and on the international plane. This is all the more important as all States Members of the United Nations are called upon and obliged to share the burden of the maintenance of international peace and security through, inter alia, assessed contributions to the peacekeeping budget, the provision of troops for United Nations peacekeeping missions and the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Security Council under chapter VII of the Charter.

Against this background, Ghana continues to subscribe to the Non-Aligned Movement's position on all aspects of the question of increasing the membership of the Security Council, as complemented by the African position duly reflected in the draft resolution that the African Group introduced during the previous session of the General Assembly. Africa, with its 53 Member States, has called for the allocation of two permanent rotating seats and two additional non-permanent seats. It is both politically and morally unacceptable that Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean regions are excluded from the category of permanent members.

It would be remiss of me if I did not touch on the veto power granted to the five permanent members. While acknowledging that the Charter grants an exemption from the principle of the sovereign equality of States by granting the five permanent members the veto — which is an important tool in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities — we believe that the veto also stifles discussion and consensus, and we call for restrictions on its use and for its eventual abolition. It is an anachronistic mechanism.

Finally, my delegation is ready to join others in undertaking the reform of the Security Council.

We would also like to congratulate the new non-permanent members — South Africa, Panama, Belgium, Italy and Indonesia — on their election to the Security Council. I am confident that the new members of the Council will join us in working for a more transparent, accountable, efficient and representative Security Council, in line with the general reform of the United Nations, in order to make the Organization more effective in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Regarding agenda item 9, "Report of the Security Council", I would like, first of all, to thank the Permanent Representative of Qatar, Nassir Al-Nasser, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for this month, for his introduction of document A/61/2. Unfortunately, we have not been able to study the report in detail because it was issued very shortly before the date set for its consideration by the Assembly.

The increase in the Council's work over recent years has had a detrimental effect on the efficiency with which reports on its activities have been presented. The result is that reports are very long and almost entirely statistical in content, with limited analysis of the events reported on. This tendency is also clear in the work of the subsidiary bodies and as concerns issues such as the improvement of the Council's working methods, which have not been dealt with in the detailed manner that we believe would foster a more complete and satisfactory debate.

With regard to agenda item 111 on Security Council reform, Uruguay, as we have said in the past, agrees about the need for the Security Council to be reformed with a view to adapting it to current circumstances and new challenges. Uruguay believes it necessary for the Council to increase in membership, while becoming more efficient, representative, democratic and transparent. Therefore, we also believe it essential to improve the Council's working methods.

Accordingly, we welcome the fact that the members of the Security Council are also working to that end and we understand that it is essential for there to be an exchange of information and views among members of the Council and those interested States that are not members of the Council before defining the different mechanisms needed to improve the work of that body.

Ever since the earliest work towards the establishment of the United Nations, Uruguay has expressed its opposition to the use of the veto. We therefore reiterate that it is not possible for us to support any solution that would envisage an increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council which, in that capacity, would have a right of veto. The inequity and inequality among sovereign States caused by the veto would not be reduced by giving that right to a few more States.

Uruguay vigorously supports the strengthening of the international normative framework established to promote democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. We understand that the question of human rights is no longer the exclusive purview of the domestic jurisdiction of States and therefore we understand also that nothing should prevent the application of the principle of the responsibility to protect. We fully agree with those Member States that have taken the position in this forum that in all cases of genocide or humanitarian catastrophe collective action should be taken through the Security Council without a veto being cast.

Uruguay's position dates from the time of the very creation of the Organization. At the San Francisco Conference, the delegation of Uruguay drew attention to the need for members of the Security Council to be admitted to that body without differences of prerogatives or rights, accepting the fact that the countries that had borne the heaviest weight of the war should be guaranteed seats, but not indefinitely. A fixed-term deemed to be appropriate would be proposed.

Uruguay, which has supported the model submitted by the G-4, but without the veto, hopes to be able to cooperate with due flexibility in the forthcoming stages of dealing with these questions. We hope that the negotiations will be open, direct, inclusive and, in particular, transparent.

Mr. De Palacio España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Spain welcomes the opportunity offered by this joint debate today and we would like to begin by thanking in particular the Permanent Representative of Qatar for introducing the report on the work of the Security Council (A/61/2).

We have come here to share some thoughts about the question relating to the reform of the Security Council in all areas, under agenda item 111. In these times of change, when we are exchanging views about everything we have achieved so far in reforming the Organization, the question of the reform of the Security Council remains an outstanding item. This is in spite of the valuable and serious initiatives presented over recent months to make progress and put forward proposals to bring about a democratic reform in which Member States carry out their tasks with responsibility and within a framework of equality and representativity.

The fact is, however, that in spite of the formulas proposed by Member States, it has not been possible to establish a negotiating framework that would make it possible for us to make progress in settling on the elements of a possible agreement. The formal initiatives for the reform of the Security Council submitted in the previous session made it clear that it would not be possible to bring about reform unless there is genuine negotiation among all members of the Organization. There can be no reform which could become a reality without negotiation to make possible the widest possible agreement on the part of all the States.

Therefore, if this Assembly wishes to make progress towards a solution in reforming the Security Council, the issue of what should be the parameters for such a negotiation must be seriously addressed. In an open negotiation, we must deal in an orderly and systematic way with such matters as the desirable number of members of the Council that would continue to make it operational and efficient; the equitable distribution of members in accordance with regional groupings; the duration of mandates and the possibility of re-election — once or successively — as well as possible periods of ineligibility between elections; the eventual work of regional groups when they propose new members for election; the majorities required for decisions in an new, expanded Security Council; and ultimately, and not least important, the fundamental question of the working methods of the Council.

In this respect, at the 95th plenary meeting of the sixtieth session, held on 20 July, my delegation indicated its support for the draft resolution presented by the delegations of Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Jordan, Singapore and Switzerland on reforming the working methods of the Security Council. This draft resolution contains proposals of great value with regard to strengthening the relationship among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council; participation in the Security Council's work of States that are not Council members, where appropriate, particularly in its subsidiary bodies; and the two key questions of the effective implementation of Security Council resolutions and the fair and rational use of the veto. As was the case with the reform of the composition of the Security Council, we hope that this draft resolution relating to its working methods can be considered with the broadest support possible on the part of all Member States.

For serious and open negotiations on reforming the Security Council, it is indispensable to have a commitment to formulas that promote equality of all Member States — excluding the option of new permanent members, which does not enjoy the necessary support within the Organization — in accordance with the criteria laid down by the Charter, as was shown clearly over the last few months.

Similarly, we would have to ensure the responsibility of members of the Council to the membership as a whole, and that is to be achieved through re-election. We believe a decision of such importance as the reform of the Security Council cannot be adopted without first building a broad consensus on which to base the future work of one of the principal organs of our Organization.

My delegation believes that the process to follow to achieve the objective of reform should be conducted from now on by the President of the General Assembly in such a way, as has been pointed out previously, that all relevant questions can be examined in an orderly manner. On this point, we must repeat that the limit for moving forward, in our opinion, is the idea of creating new permanent members whose role cannot be justified in accordance with the model of the Organization, which we want to strengthen to meet the challenges of our century. It is important that those States that have proposed the creation of new permanent members be willing to accept an understanding whereby all other options, no matter how divergent they might seem, would be discussed with a view to achieving a broad consensus.

The informal meeting in which heads of State and Government, ministers and delegations from many States participated on 20 September was, in our opinion, a milestone in the process of discussing Security Council reform. The new context in which we find ourselves — which presumably acknowledges the limit of everyone's position and the need to reach broader agreements — should lead us to the beginning of a true negotiating process, for which we are fully prepared. Thus, we hope to succeed in transforming the Security Council to make it more effective, transparent and democratic in order to serve the objectives of the Charter and all Members of the Organization.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): Nigeria aligns itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the Permanent Representative of Niger, on behalf of the African Group. However, I wish to make a few points to express Nigeria's views on a number of issues.

The debate on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for more than a decade. Our leaders underscored its importance during their Summit in September 2005, when they called for reforms in the United Nations, including the Security Council. This debate is thus welcome. Nigeria believes that, given the stalemate in the protracted informal consultative process, the time is ripe for a new approach that should be led by the President of the Assembly to give momentum to our deliberations. Such an approach would give meaning to the good intentions expressed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

The report before us (A/61/2), although lacking in appreciable details and analysis, nonetheless highlights the following points: first, most of the issues before the Council are daunting and complex; secondly, some of the issues are recurrent; thirdly, no region is devoid of threats to international peace and security; and fourthly, the issue of international peace and security, as variously recognized, is indeed a collective matter that requires the support of all.

It is therefore evident that, if the Council is to be able to address the issues before it — some of which have lingered for too long — urgent reforms are required. In that regard, I should reiterate Nigeria's view that the Security Council, in pursuit of its functions under the Charter, should initiate formal or informal deliberations on the situation in a Member State only when it is abundantly clear that there is a credible threat to international peace and security. Furthermore, Nigeria shares the view that any Member State whose matter is under consideration by the Council should be given the opportunity to be heard not only in open Council meetings, but also in closed ones. That would promote fairness and equity and also enhance the legitimacy of the Council's decisions.

Undoubtedly, neither the wider membership of our Organization nor the framers of its Charter intended from the outset that the Council should become divorced from accountability, legitimacy and transparency in its decision-making process. Hence, Nigeria strongly supports the call for improvements in its working methods and for reporting to the General Assembly in a manner in keeping with the Charter.

Nigeria also believes that, as the Non-Aligned Movement has consistently stressed, there is merit in formalizing the consultation process among the presidents of the three principal organs, namely, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. That would help to align the agendas of those principal organs and would also minimize duplication and encroachment, especially on matters that are of concern to many Member States.

Nigeria is pleased with the Security Council's efforts to increasingly shoulder its Charter responsibilities. We are particularly pleased with the Council's cooperation with and support for regional organizations to resolve conflicts, especially in Africa. As we are all aware, the Council has worked assiduously with the African Union and subregional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States in resolving conflicts in southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The series of visits by Council members to our region and dialogues with regional leaders, including President Olusegun Obasanjo, have enhanced better understanding of the issues at stake in our search for durable solutions.

Member States have demonstrated their commitment to reforms in the United Nations through the replacement of the Human Rights Commission with the Human Rights Council and the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission. But those measures are not exhaustive. Rather, they point to the need for a more comprehensive transformation of our cherished Organization for the better. We must resist the temptation to settle for cosmetic changes, when what we need is a fundamental transformation of the organs of the Organization.

It is against that background that Nigeria would like to restate and reaffirm its support for Africa's position on reform of the Security Council as defined in the decisions taken by African heads of State and Government since 2005. Lest there be any doubt, that includes expansion in Africa's representation and exercise of benefits in the permanent membership of the Council. Increasing the size and representation of both the permanent and non-permanent categories of Council membership would, in our view, enable the Council to gain in stature and credibility as well as ensure that its decisions receive the widest possible support from the international community.

The challenge before us is to overcome the reluctance of some Member States to move in that direction — a reluctance that lies at the heart of the stalemate in our deliberations. Given this state of affairs, Nigeria would encourage Member States to demonstrate in practical terms their support in principle for expanding the membership of the Security Council. The issue of the exercise of the rights and benefits of members of an expanded Council should not be used as an excuse to hinder a consensus on that aspect of reform.

Unfortunately, the question of the veto has been seized upon by some to block Africa's legitimate demand and quest for representation in the permanent membership of the Council. We must not forget Africa's long-held view that the use of the veto has become anachronistic and should therefore be abolished. That position is not new in Africa; it predates both the report of the High-level Panel (A/59/565) and the Secretary-General's report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005). Indeed, it is reflected in the draft resolutions submitted by the Group of 3 plus one and the African Group, which should provide a platform for reaching a consensus on this important matter.

Without detracting from the African position, that would suggest that there is room in our debates to find creative and acceptable solutions to the vexed question of the veto. In fact, contemporary developments — especially the most recent debates and decisions of the Council — have cast the problem in higher relief. Nigeria thus calls on Member States to exercise the political will and flexibility required to achieve this goal in the not-too-distant future.

While Nigeria respects the views of those Member States that insist on the need for consensus before a decision on Security Council reform is taken, the search for consensus should reflect a common desire for accommodation informed by shared objectives — in this case, urgent reform of the Council. We hope that Member States will set aside narrow interests and support the overdue reform and expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council. We should allow ourselves neither to be diverted from that objective nor to succumb to the temptation to abandon this important but uncompleted aspect of United Nations reform.

Nigeria looks forward to your able leadership, Madam President, in urging Member States to rise above their differences and to establish a mechanism that would make it possible for formal negotiations to commence in the General Assembly under your leadership. We wish to assure you of our cooperation and readiness to embark on that exercise at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to express my delegation's thanks to the Permanent Representative of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the current month, for introducing the report of the Council (A/61/2). I should also like to express my delegation's support for the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the Permanent Representative of Niger, on behalf of the Group of African States.

We are meeting today to discuss once again two important items that have been on the agenda of the General Assembly for many years and on which no conclusions have been reached. We have tirelessly studied those two items in order to find a successful solution to the issue of Security Council reform, which is at an impasse and which at the same time is considered a prerequisite for overall United Nations reform.

Everyone here knows full well that it has been impossible to transform the Security Council into a democratic, impartial and transparent mechanism that truly guarantees international peace and security. Everyone also knows that the Council has sometimes been used to interfere in States' internal affairs or to provoke them. And it is no exaggeration to say that the Security Council was even one of the instruments of the recent Israeli aggression against Lebanon, because it stood by as a powerless spectator without taking any measures for 34 long days, while the Israeli destruction machine demolished Lebanese infrastructure and brought Lebanese homes down on the heads of their inhabitants. We have also seen how the Security Council has dealt with the massacres perpetrated against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and how the crimes of the occupation have been justified under the pretext of self-defence. All of those shameful Security Council positions result from the domination exercised by some States, permanent Council members, and from their excessive abuse of the right of veto.

If that situation persists, the international community will no longer need the Security Council. And I do not believe that any of us needs a Council whose budget we all pay while it is used by a handful of States and peoples. Nor do I believe that we need a Security Council that abuses Chapter VII of the Charter and uses it to deal with certain ethnic or religious groups whenever the opportunity arises. We do not need a Security Council that practices selectivity and the policy of double standards and acts according to the diktat and interests of one Power or group of States.

The Security Council's resolutions related to the maintenance of international peace and security must be impartial and fair and must reflect the genuine collective will of the international community. However, that collective will has not been truly reflected because of the virtual monopoly on the veto exercised by a few States. That privilege has become an instrument to support aggression and humiliation against the weak, has led to the paralysis of the international community and to the imposition of the policy of fait accompli.

For many years, we have worked tirelessly to find a successful solution to the issue of Security Council reform through the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group, but we have failed. We, the Member States, have worked diligently for the past two years, with more intense activity than ever before. We have submitted proposals, made contacts and engaged in consultations and even negotiations, but we have made no significant progress on Security Council reform. We remain at square one. The reason is that the privileged States hang on to their privileges, refusing to relinquish them or to share them with others. Given that situation, we must all help to rid ourselves of national egoism and act rationally in order to serve the collective good of the United Nations and bring about peace, security, development, prosperity, freedom and human rights for all. The Security Council's credibility must be restored through an improvement in its working methods and an expansion of its membership, in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

But in order to achieve that, the criteria decided on at the end of the Second World War should no longer be used, and States' size or military or economic power should no longer take precedence. What must be taken into account is the ability of States to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, setting aside national aspirations or desires for hegemony, putting various cultures and continents on an equal footing and ensuring non-discrimination among Member States in rights and duties.

The African continent has suffered more than other continents from the arrangements that resulted from the end of the Second World War. For example, Africa was absent from the Security Council, as most of its States suffered from foreign occupation, colonialism and racism. African States are now independent and represent more than one quarter of the membership of the United Nations; justice must be done. Africa's rights must be recognized, and those historical injustices must be rectified. Africa's marginalization must end. Africa must have fair representation in an expanded Security Council. It must have a permanent seat in the Council as well as non-permanent seats in a number commensurate with its size.

Libya, a member of the African Union, supports the Common African Position, which is the outcome of the fifth African Summit meeting, held at Sirte, on 4 and 5 July 2005. That Position was reaffirmed in the two special summit meetings of the African Union held at Addis Ababa on 4 August 2005 and 31 October 2005, respectively. In accordance with that position, two permanent seats would be allocated to Africa, with all privileges due a permanent member, including the right to veto, together with five non-permanent seats.

Africa wishes to receive the privileges given to other continents, among others the veto. That does not mean that we support increasing the number of countries that have the veto power. Rather, we would prefer that the right of veto be abolished. However, for the time being its use should be restricted. There can be no true reform of the Security Council if the veto is not eliminated. But until the veto is abolished, it would only be fair for Africa to have that privilege, as other Member States do.

The report of the Security Council submitted to us does not give us a clear picture of what takes place in the Council, nor does it reflect the Council's commitment to the resolutions of the General Assembly by including, for example, an analysis of the considerations on the basis of which Security Council resolutions are adopted.

The report contains no thorough analysis of the situations of States members of the Security Council, nor does it offer reasons that might explain the powerlessness of the Security Council vis-à-vis the serious crises that threaten international peace and security. We hope that the report of the Security Council in future will be more serious and will show clearly what the Council has done in the process of discharging its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and what the General Assembly has done to remedy the paralysis that afflicts the Council from time to time because of use of the veto.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): This is an important debate. It is the annual occasion for the United Nations membership as a whole to come together to discuss the work of the Security Council, as presented in the annual report introduced earlier today on our collective behalf by the Ambassador of Qatar. I must say that, if you look at the report, if you listen to some of the interventions which I have just sat through, the two do not come together. I want to be quite clear that I represent a Security Council which I believe to be working pretty efficiently, that can do better, but does not correspond to some of the comments I have just heard.

I should like today to address three main issues: first, the policy challenges the Council is facing; secondly, reform of Council working methods; and, thirdly, the unresolved issue of reform of the Council itself.

The Security Council has rarely figured so centrally in so many pressing issues as it has over the past year. In one month alone, July 2006 — the last month covered by the report — the Council confronted four major challenges in addition to its regular business. It looked at the North Korean missile test; how to end sustainably the crisis between Israel and Lebanon; how to implement the Darfur Peace Agreement in the Sudan; and, lastly, Iran's refusal to suspend its nuclear enrichment activities. Those are four central issues affecting the maintenance of international peace and security, and the Council tackled and dealt with each of those issues.

That the Council should be so engaged on the big issues of the day is both a success for the multilateral system and a challenge to it. It shows that the international community and the Council members themselves recognize the indispensable and unique legitimacy of the Council in addressing challenges to international peace and security. But it also places a heavy responsibility on the Council to ensure it can take decisions and then deliver on them. That requires us to be more timely and to act before it is too late, to take our rhetoric about conflict prevention and responsibility to protect and put both into practice, to sharpen our tools and improve our use of them. It challenges us all, particularly Council members, to respond coherently when our decisions are ignored.

There are no easy answers. Part of the response is to improve Council interaction with others, with the Assembly, with the Secretariat, with regional organizations and other actors; with new bodies, such as the Peacebuilding Commission. Part of the response is to improve the way we work as a Council, making sure that we not only adopt resolutions and statements, but think strategically and ensure follow-up to our actions.

This leads me to my second theme, reform of Council working methods. I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding leadership on this issue by the Ambassador of Japan. He had the vision to see that the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, whose chairmanship had rotated monthly, needed to be taken seriously and put on a more workable footing. Japan has driven the work of that Group with energy and enthusiasm, as well as with pragmatism and a focus on making a real difference.

The compendium of changes agreed by the Working Group last summer will — if we implement them — make the Council more effective internally and more transparent and inclusive externally, including towards the Assembly. In my view, the Council has nothing to lose and everything to gain from this approach. Our common challenge now is to focus on implementing what has been agreed — changes which in themselves are modest individually but whose cumulative effect is a substantial change in favour of transparency and openness.

Reforming the working methods is a necessary part of the reform of the Council, but it is not sufficient. There has been insufficient progress in the debate on Council enlargement in the past 12 months. This is a real source of concern to my Government. Let me be clear: the responsibility for that rests rather more with the Assembly than it does with the Security Council. The United Kingdom has long supported the Group of Four, and will continue to do so. We support Germany, India, Japan and Brazil for permanent membership of the Council on their individual and collective merits. But permanent African membership is also overdue. And we want to see more non-permanent members, thus improving the Council's accountability and transparency.

But we are not wedded to a single model of reform. What we want above all is to see progress, to see a model of enlargement that can attain the necessary support in the United Nations membership and which will deliver a more representative and effective Council. For that reason, Prime Minister Blair, in a speech in May this year at Georgetown University, stressed that he was sure reform was needed in order to adapt the Council to today's world. He urged the United Nations membership to agree, if necessary, on some form of interim change that could be a bridge to a future settlement. We are open to new ideas from across the membership that will give life to the debate and — more than that — that will take us beyond the debate to permit decisions and to reform the Council.

My hope, therefore, is that when this debate takes place next year, the Assembly will have seen a reformed Council through improved working methods; a more effective and successful Council in terms of its decision-making; and a Council on its way to enlargement and real, structural reform. My Government will be an active participant in all of that work.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): At the 2005 World Summit, our leaders expressed their support for the early reform and expansion of the Security Council as an essential element in the overall effort to reform the United Nations in order to reflect today's realities. To date, there has not been any substantial progress on this matter, despite the fact that this is not a new issue. Security Council reform has been in discussion for the past 13 years in working groups specifically created for that purpose. Furthermore, extensive debate has been under way within the United Nations, starting with the High-level Panel, including deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of

the Security Council and other Matters Related to the Security Council.

The proposals made so far on Security Council enlargement have not managed to create a basis for consensus, although we all share, to a large degree, the same need and the same goal of a more effective and more accountable Security Council that is more representative of today's world.

We fully agree with the recent statement made by the Secretary-General in Geneva that no reform of the United Nations will be complete unless the Security Council is included. We share his sense of urgency and his reasoning regarding bringing the Council into the twenty-first century. We continue to believe that the comprehensive reform and expansion of the Security Council will bring it into line with contemporary geopolitical realities and reinforce the collective security system of the Charter, thus contributing to the strengthening of the United Nations as a whole.

My country remains in favour of the Council's enlargement in both the permanent and the non-permanent member categories. Such an enlargement will increase the efficiency, accountability and transparency of the Security Council, thereby enhancing its multicultural and multidimensional character and rendering it more representative of the world we live in.

In this respect, we would like to reiterate our support for the principles contained in the draft resolution of the Group of Four, which Greece has co-sponsored. We hope and encourage all members to work together constructively with a view to reaching an agreement that can be supported by the largest possible majority of the Organization.

Part of the Security Council reform is also the improvement of the working methods of the Council. In this respect, we take note of the proposal of the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5). It is a step in the right direction, but we do not consider it encompassing enough to lead to a comprehensive reform of the Council.

Reform is an ongoing process, because an international organization should always stay in touch with reality. Nevertheless political momentum is necessary for every major step forward. The impetus behind the ambitious effort that started with the High-level Panel's report is almost exhausted. Many goals have already been achieved, and in many fields we are close to reaching most — or at least some — of our initial wishes. In order to effectively face today's serious global threats and challenges, the Security Council should not lag behind. We strongly believe that Security Council reform cannot be further delayed, and in this regard we hope that, by the end of the sixty-first session, we will all be in a position to take that much-awaited action.

Mrs. Silkalna (Latvia): I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the Permanent Representative of Qatar, for having presented the report of the Security Council (A/61/2). The report remains essentially a collection of facts — facts that reflect the large number of challenges to international peace and security. Fittingly, we are debating the report jointly with the question of Security Council reform. That aspect is fundamentally important to the successful reform of the United Nations. Regrettably, after more than a decade of debate, and particular efforts last year, a widely agreed solution to the issue of Security Council reform still eludes us.

Numerous States Members of the United Nations have not served on the Security Council and may not do so for quite a long time yet — if ever. However, we are all constantly affected in direct and indirect ways by the decisions made in the Security Council. My delegation therefore appreciates this opportunity today to briefly state our position.

The composition of the Security Council in its present form suffers from unbalanced representation. The world has grown and changed in the past 60 years, and the Security Council needs to adapt accordingly. While the Security Council Chamber has been expanded over the years to seat 15, the Trusteeship Council Chamber next door now seats 192.

Regrettably, mistrust and resentment towards the Security Council — generated by the current imbalance — has harmed the overall reform process and will also no doubt continue to hamper many of our diverse efforts until the Security Council becomes more representative.

We believe membership should be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. In our view, a number of Member States — such as Germany, Japan, India and Brazil — are well equipped and qualified to assume the responsibilities of a long-term presence on the Security Council. Having said that, we believe the right of the veto should not be extended further, and that its current use could be made more transparent to the wider membership.

It is laudable that efforts towards the reform of the working methods are being made within the Security Council. The proposals by the members of the group of five small nations — the so-called "Small Five" (S-5) — have much merit. In our view, they should be considered alongside the question of enlargement.

The proposals of the Group of Four, which we have supported, evidently are not acceptable to a broad majority; nor, for that matter, have any other proposals for enlargement garnered enough support. Now is the time for all Member States, in particular the aspirants to new permanent seats, to propose and consider new and more viable ideas. Latvia will consider all new models for enlargement that may lead to an expansion of the membership of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories within a reasonable time frame.

Our hope is for sincere, constructive efforts among Member States to finally achieve a breakthrough on reform in the coming year.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): It is my delegation's view that the reform of the Security Council constitutes an important part of the overall reform of the United Nations — a process that we as Member States committed ourselves to through the 2005 Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). Norway's long-standing priority has been to ensure that the Council operates coherently and efficiently and that the composition of the Council reflects the current configuration of the membership of the United Nations. Consequently, we support the expansion of the Security Council.

There are several reasons why Norway believes the expansion of the Council is necessary. Over the past six decades, the overall membership of the United Nations has almost quadrupled. The Security Council should reflect that growth in order to ensure the Council's legitimacy and efficiency. Norway is also an advocate for the interests of small countries in the rotation of non-permanent seats. Consequently, Norway supports a balanced enlargement of the Security Council — an enlargement in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, where small countries and developing countries are duly represented.

We cannot discuss the expansion of the Security Council without addressing the question of the right to the veto. We have consistently encouraged permanent members to refrain from exercising their power of the veto. In order to ensure an efficient Council, the Norwegian view has been that the power of the veto should not be extended to the new permanent members of an enlarged Council. We therefore welcome earlier statements made by the Group of Four that it is their intention not to exercise the right to the veto.

The improvement of the Council's working methods continues to be important. The draft resolution proposed by Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland aims at improving the dialogue between the General Assembly and the Security Council. While the draft resolution fully respects the Security Council's competencies, it positively points to areas where cooperation should be deepened. It is Norway's view that an enhanced and structured dialogue between the General Assembly and the Council would lead to the strengthening of both.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): We wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening this joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111, respectively entitled "Report of the Security Council" and "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". We also wish to join other delegations in thanking the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for the month of December for his introduction of the report of the Security Council (A/61/2).

At the outset, we would like to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My delegation wishes to make a few additional remarks in its national capacity.

The Charter of the United Nations confers tremendous power upon the Security Council, particularly its permanent members. However, with power comes responsibility — responsibility to exercise power justly and fairly while placing the broader interests of humankind over narrow and parochial national interests. That power should not be exercised to settle old political scores or to intimidate small States. Unfortunately, over the past decade, Rwanda has been at the receiving end of that abuse of power by a particular permanent member. We believe that such actions do a great disservice to the Council and succeed only in undermining its credibility.

Reforming the Security Council without addressing its flawed working methods and decision-making process would render such a process incomplete, and even futile. Indeed, a fundamental reform of the Security Council's working methods and decision-making process must be at the very heart of a comprehensive reform process, so that an expanded and reformed Council is seen by all States, and especially by small States such as Rwanda, to be more transparent, credible, legitimate and representative.

We welcome the modest efforts by the Council to improve its working methods following the recommendations of its internal Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. At the 2005 World Summit our heads of State recommended that we enhance the accountability of the Security Council to the general membership of the United Nations and increase the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of its work. Clearly, a lot remains to be done before we can truly say that the expectations of our leaders at the World Summit have been met.

When issues affecting a particular State or group of States are before the Council, there needs to be a greater effort by Council members to consult those Member States, as they have a greater local knowledge of the issues under consideration. That goes beyond merely inviting such countries to participate in Council meetings under Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter of the United Nations. There should be participation in both discussions and decision-making on issues. That would greatly increase the legitimacy and implementability of Council decisions.

We welcome the joint meetings between the Security Council and the African Union during the reporting period. It is essential that that consultative process continue, and perhaps become more frequent and formalized. Regional organizations often have considerable local knowledge and experience that could enrich the deliberative and decision-making processes of the Security Council.

On the issue of the enlargement of the Security Council, Rwanda remains committed to the African Group's position. However, it is clear that, although there is consensus among Member States about the necessity for the enlargement of the Council, we are still deeply divided about how that enlargement should be brought about. Indeed, we are so divided, and positions are so far apart, that it is difficult to envisage a breakthrough any time soon. The question we should then ask ourselves is whether all reform should be put on hold until consensus emerges on the issue of enlargement. It would appear that the wait may be too long, and that there is a danger that the momentum for Security Council reform that we built up last year will be completely lost. It may therefore be plausible for Member States to consider beginning the reform process with the working methods of the Security Council, where there is greater agreement. While doing so we should consider whether reforms to the working methods are indeed possible, or even sustainable, without our simultaneously addressing the issue of the Council's composition.

Rwanda believes that the differences can only be narrowed by further open, transparent and interactive debate in the General Assembly. Member States must also adopt a constructive and flexible spirit in that process, because, clearly, it is only by doing so that we can hope to meaningfully reform the Council any time soon. Only by each of us surrendering a little can we hope for collective gain.

We remain optimistic that consensus on this important issue is possible, as regards both working methods and the composition of the Council. We believe that by working together constructively we can reform the Security Council to make it more transparent, credible, legitimate and accessible, as well as to expand its membership to make it more representative. That is what our leaders mandated us to do at the World Summit.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): During the past year, a number of important results have been achieved in the efforts to reform the United Nations. However, for the United Nations to be relevant, legitimate, effective and capable of dealing with the many new threats and challenges that we, the international community, all face together, the reform process must continue. As we are in the midst of trying to implement decisions already taken, we must not lose sight of the fact that reform of the Security Council is an essential part of the overall effort to reform the United Nations. The Security Council's composition, size and working methods must all be addressed.

Sweden believes that the Security Council should better mirror today's world, which requires stronger representation from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Any reform of the composition of the Council should, in our view, be subject to a recurrent and effective review mechanism. Such a mechanism could open up the way for future changes — for instance, a seat for the European Union on the Security Council as the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy develops.

We want the Security Council to be an effective body that can act quickly and in a transparent manner. It is therefore our firm conviction that the power of the veto should not be extended to new members. Instead, we would like to see a veto-free culture promoted in the Council. In addition, the Security Council's working methods should be reformed. Its openness, transparency and interaction with other United Nations bodies must be strengthened.

We should now find ways to move forward. This issue should be approached with an open mind and readiness to show flexibility. Reform of the Council should help to enhance its legitimacy. Therefore, any reform needs to enjoy the broadest possible support. We should now start a process to garner such support, while taking into account the legitimate claims of some countries to be better represented on this, the most powerful body of the United Nations system. I can assure the Assembly that Sweden will continue to engage actively in a constructive dialogue on how to reform the Security Council.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): Today's debate is most timely. We have reached a point where we must at last proceed with an honest assessment of the work of the Security Council — and more so of the debate that has been taking place for many years regarding the reform of the Council — and agree on the way forward. I would like to thank Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Qatar and President of the Security Council, for introducing the report (A/61/2) of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

Without underestimating the relevance and importance of the information contained in the report, I would like to suggest that it proceeds from a rather static and formalistic view of the relationship between the two main political organs. At a time when we are talking of reform and change, I believe that we are entitled to have the ambition to build a more dynamic, interactive and dialectical relationship. Beyond any differences of opinion on functions and competencies, we all realize the need for an integrated approach and the interdependence between the issues dealt with by the General Assembly and those dealt with by the Security Council.

Going beyond received ideas and stereotypes, we need a flexible and pragmatic approach, in particular as concerns reform. To a certain extent, the expansion of the membership of the Council seems to be a generally shared wish; but, at the same time, for most of us it is desirable only if it improves the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Council. Of course, we must still agree on the definition of those two notions. But, in any event, they are inextricably interlinked. Indeed, it is its capacity to actually maintain or restore international peace and security that is the raison d'être of the Security Council and the justification for its unique character. It can therefore be legitimate only if it is effective. At the same time, however, it can only be effective if it is legitimate.

We are fully in Aristotle's teleological dialectic. Those two conditions are necessary to one another but not sufficient. Most of the time, effectiveness also requires efficiency and other elements. Legitimacy also requires a democratic element and an element of credibility, acceptance, accountability and representation. In that connection, I must say that, without questioning the lofty and legitimate ambition of every State Member of the United Nations to serve in the Security Council, at least from the perspective of smaller States, membership is not necessarily the primary or sole component of democratic character. Transparency, accountability, access, upholding and defending international legality and association with the work of the Council, in particular through an interactive relationship with the General Assembly, could be as important as, if not more important than, an elusive and exceptionally scarce potential membership. That is why the debate on working methods is inextricably linked to the enlargement debate. Both elements must eventually be addressed, preferably simultaneously but certainly in the framework of an integrated and comprehensive approach.

It seems to me that there is currently momentum for this debate. There is also prima facie broad agreement that reform of the Council, including its expansion, is necessary and can improve both its effectiveness and its legitimacy. If that is so, the main question before us is how to achieve that reform. I believe that we need to focus primarily on the process and the methodology. Then, without abandoning legitimate ambitions, we need also to define, in realistic terms, the realm of the feasible.

There have been some very interesting ideas derived from the philosophy of intermediate or transitional arrangements, as well as other opinions and innovative thoughts on all or some of the elements of Security Council reform.

In response to your appeal, Madam President, I have myself shared with a number of colleagues, in the context of brainstorming, an idea of an evolutionary and gradual approach that goes through various stages before achieving the end result. The main conceptual difference between transitional and evolutionary is that, while in the former one makes a change valid for a specific span of time and counts on an aleatory future agreement, in the latter one already has, in the amendment of the Charter, both the path that will be followed and the final result that will ultimately be reached. At the same time, one offers something up front, both in terms of an increase in the number of non-permanent members and in terms of differentiation of the new potential global players and a clear midterm perspective, both in terms of time horizon and content, while respecting the sensitivities of the quasi-totality of members.

We also need to think afresh about the veto and the role of the permanent members. Without trying to pre-empt reflection on this issue, and in the framework of the integrated approach I am asking for, can we not, for instance, revisit the mechanism of the Acheson, or Uniting for Peace (resolution 377 (V)) and other customs established throughout the relevant practice, such as the fact that the abstention or non-participation of a permanent member in a decision of the Council does not prevent the adoption of the relevant draft resolution? Rather than a frontal attack against the veto or the privileged membership, can we not instead build a more inclusive approach?

On methodology and the process, I believe that — under the guidance of the President of the General Assembly and through a far-reaching, frank and open debate through informal gatherings of ambassadors in various formats, possibly by associating members of academia and other interested persons, but in a systematic, intensive and constructive manner — we can reach general agreement on the rules and modalities of the process that will provide the legitimacy of any decision, even if such a solution is a compromise that most probably will not be 100 per cent satisfactory for anyone.

We also need commitment on the part of all of us to reach agreement. Indeed, more than a *pactum de negotiando* — a commitment to negotiate — we need a *pactum de contrahendo* — a commitment to conclude. Whether a vote or consensus, or a combination of both — one alternating with the other in a complementary manner — is the proper course of action, the right course of action will be the one that all of us accept as useful, necessary and catalytic.

By now, we all know the positions and visions of most States or groups of States. Revisited from the perspective of an integrated approach, and taking into account the interdependence of the issues and the finality of the action of the United Nations, those visions may be of great value and may contain the necessary common ground that will allow us to move forward, provided that we go beyond the issue of respective functions and competencies, the marking of respective territories and a narrow approach of national interest by Member States. That will be reflected in terms of complementarities, synergies and the level of participation in the Security Council as a functional responsibility intimately and inextricably linked with the actual capacity to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Organization in the field of the maintenance and restoration of international peace and security.

Mr. Bonavia (Malta): I would like, at the outset, to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar and current President of the Security Council, for his presentation to the General Assembly yesterday of the exhaustive and enlightening annual report of the Security Council, contained in document A/61/2.

Slightly less than half the membership of the United Nations has taken the floor in the past two days on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Yet again, it is evident that diverging views reign supreme on this sensitive issue. Indeed, the time is more than ripe for the General Assembly to engage itself in substantive negotiations on this theme. My delegation feels strongly that rigid national positions need to be avoided, in order to identify a collective solution that responds to the shared concerns of the entire United Nations membership and to the imperatives for far-reaching reform in the international system.

We feel the urgent need for a consensual approach and the broadest possible agreement through further negotiations involving all parties concerned, in order to arrive at a solution that can pass the ultimate test in the General Assembly. We believe that we need to redouble our efforts to reach effective agreement on this issue. Taking into account the present impasse, there is no solution in sight without negotiations among all parties concerned. At this juncture, I would also like to underscore that that solution should provide for meaningful and effective reform without forcing divisive and potentially damaging procedures on the General Assembly as individual States vie for special status.

A meaningful reform process needs to grapple with those weaknesses through concerted action. It is in that spirit alone that we share the view of those who maintain that Security Council reform must deal simultaneously with the two-pronged problem of working methods and the expansion of the membership. Accountability is not simply a function of reporting and transparency; it is just as much a function of the method and manner in which membership is chosen. Timely and effective responses are indeed affected by the availability, and abuse of, the power of the veto, but they are also affected by the balance and range of representation within the Council membership.

My delegation firmly believes that we need to adequately address the problems that exist in the Council in terms of both substance and procedure. In that regard, we endorse the approach taken by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5). The Group's draft resolution (A/60/L.49) is to be commended for tackling head-on the more critical and sensitive issues, without precluding the thorny question of the veto. At the same time, the S-5 initiative can readily be integrated within the broader process of reform — which, in our view, must inevitably also deal with the question of enlargement.

With regard to enlargement, my delegation is among those that believe that the way forward does not lie in concentrating on the question of permanent membership. Rather, we should show ourselves to be more flexible to the subject by examining formulas that reaffirm, rather than erode, the very principle of rotation. Flexibility is a must, as it would permit breathing space for a fresh approach — indeed, an approach that would foster inclusiveness and demonstrate the ability to accommodate the interests and concerns of every Member State.

As a small State with limited expectations of Council membership, we also consider all proposals in terms of the rotation options for membership that they open up for the membership of the United Nations in general. We are not convinced by the argument that an increase in the number of permanent members will create more space for the rest of the membership.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that we must identify ways by which the negotiations process can move away from its long-standing inertia. One point that seems to be emerging from the current discussion is that, regrettably, we do not yet have the main elements around which consensus can be built.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Much has been said on this subject, and there is danger of treating this important matter as one of routine or ritual, and carrying on business as usual. But judging from the large percentage of Member States participating in this debate, this issue cannot be shrugged off. The Security Council must be reformed to reflect the geopolitical realities of today. There is no justification for the continued existence of a category of permanent seats monopolized by certain countries that are only there because they shared in the spoils of victory in the Second World War.

Every Member State, small or big, should have an opportunity to serve on the Security Council on equal terms. My delegation has in the past, in this Hall, also questioned the existence of a veto which is the preserve of the five permanent members. This is what I said in my statement to the Assembly on 11 November 2005: "The present arrangement of five permanent members with a monopoly on the power of veto cannot be rationally justified" (*A/60/PV.50, p. 16*).

My delegation reiterates the same view today. However, so long as that category of membership exists, Africa demands that it should have representation on the Security Council with the same status and exercising the same privileges, including the veto. That is no endorsement of that historical anachronism; rather, it is to say that, as long as that anachronism exists, we too should have such status until such time when that category is — hopefully — abolished. Accordingly, Africa has demanded at least two permanent seats, with the power of the veto, as well as five non-permanent seats.

There are timorous souls in this Hall and the corridors of the United Nations who have given up on Security Council reform because any suggestion of abolishing the permanent category with the veto or of expanding the permanent category by admitting new members with the power of the veto would be vetoed by any of the present Permanent Five. The reform of the Security Council has therefore been held hostage by five members. But history has shown that this type of stubbornness cannot persist forever in the face of a principled stand and determination. Eventually any of the Five will feel ashamed to cling to this archaic notion. We should therefore soldier on down the path of justified reform.

In order to move the process forward, the delegation of Uganda has in the past suggested that we could start with the less problematic issue of expansion in the non-permanent category. The expansion of that category would give more voice to developing countries in the Security Council. Eventually, we shall tackle the hard nut of the permanent seats, with the power of the veto. Some members have suggested the establishment of a category of some sort of permanent membership, but without the veto. Indeed, the Secretary-General also suggested that approach in his proposals. The reason behind this suggestion is to appease the present five permanent members and to endorse their continued privileges because, again, of the fear of any of them vetoing any reform that would do away with their privileges. Uganda has said that we do not want to join the Council as second-class citizens.

Our suggested gradual reform of the Council can also include tackling now the reform of the working methods of the Security Council. At present, much of the Security Council is shrouded in secrecy yet it makes decisions that affect the entire international community. Worse still, in those decisions that affect a particular Member State, that State is not given an opportunity to be heard. That is against the principle of natural justice. Such an opportunity to be heard should be a matter of right. To make matters worse, even when a Member is allowed to participate, its representative is only called upon to take a seat at the Security Council table, but must keep mum. That is a mockery of justice. This ritual should be done away with. A member should be given the right to speak once invited to the table. My delegation salutes the recent trend to allow more open debates where Member States that are not members of the Security Council can participate.

The reform of Security Council is long overdue. Let us move from rhetoric to action.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): This plenary meeting is devoted to consideration of agenda items 9 and 111, which pertain to the report of the Security Council (A/61/2) and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Although both items are being considered independently, as is appropriate, they are also related. We believe that they have an impact upon the international community's vision of a more representative, democratic and transparent Security Council that can respond effectively and speedily to the new challenges in the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the mandate entrusted to it — albeit not to it alone — by the Charter of the United Nations.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for the month of December, for his introduction of the annual report of the Security Council, to which I now turn.

Although the report was provided to us at a late hour, my delegation believes its presentation was relevant for it serves to meet the requirements set by the Charter as well as the need to give account of the Council's work before the full General Assembly, which includes all Member States. We wish to point out that, although we have taken note of the progress made in the Council's working methods, the format of the report still lacks the substance and analysis that would have made possible a more thorough understanding of the important and sensitive tasks assigned to the Council. We hope that the members of the Council will use this debate in the plenary Assembly to draw conclusions that will lead to progress in the submission of a report that is more substantive and not limited solely to a descriptive and chronological accounting of the subjects under its consideration.

We say that because we believe that consideration of the Council's report by Member States should not be a mere formality, but should instead reaffirm the responsibility of the Assembly for issues of fundamental importance to the entire membership of the Organization. We Member States have the right and the duty to know the work of the Council and to analyze it fully, given that, in accordance with the mandate entrusted to it by the Charter, the Council acts on behalf of all Members and that its decisions affect the entire membership of the United Nations. We need a report that allows us to become familiar not only with the substance of the Council's debates but also with the positions taken by its members with regard to the items under its consideration.

We therefore support and encourage the statements made by preceding speakers with regard to requiring that the report of the Security Council include a more interactive component involving the General Assembly, given that the Assembly is the principal organ of these two main organs of the Organization. The maintenance of international peace and security is a commitment for all of us.

We acknowledge the progress made with regard to open meetings of the Council. As far as possible, such meetings should be the rule and not the exception, to allow Member States an opportunity to express their points of view on subjects that affect both Members and the Organization itself. It is also to be hoped — optimistically, perhaps — that open meetings will be taken into consideration by Council members prior to the adoption of resolutions, rather than presenting them as faits accomplis.

We also express our concern about the expansion of the Council's functions to the detriment of other organs, and in particular of the General Assembly itself. In addition, we are concerned about the normative nature of Council resolutions, which is assuming legislative competencies that exceed the mandate conferred by the Charter.

With regard to agenda item 111, my delegation agrees with what has been said by earlier speakers, namely, that there is a need to reform the Security Council and that such reform must be comprehensive and include both working methods and the expansion of membership so as to make the Council more legitimate, inclusive, representative and transparent.

I should also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the position of the Republic of Paraguay as regards the issue of equitable representation on the Security Council and the increase in the number of members. Paraguay favours expanding the number of Council members while bearing in mind geographic equilibrium and the new geopolitical reality in which we live. We support expanding the number of members in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, including developed and developing countries alike, taking into consideration that the latter are underrepresented in this important organ. Expanding the number of members will make the Council more representative, thereby improving the legitimacy and credibility of its actions.

Likewise, the issue of the permanent members' right of the veto should be addressed as a fundamental aspect of the reform process. We should aim at the gradual but eventually total elimination of the veto. A first step in that regard should be to strictly limit its use to issues considered under Chapter VII of the Charter. We could also leave open the possibility of periodic reviews of the reform, so as to analyse the Council's functioning in accordance with future needs and realities.

My delegation hopes that through open, frank and transparent dialogue among all Member States, we will ultimately move ahead with the reform process, thereby fulfilling the mandate entrusted to us by heads of State at the September 2005 Summit.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I shall now call on speakers who wish to speak in the exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): My comments pertain to the statement made this morning by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

First, we firmly believe that the qualifications of a given country for permanent membership in the Security Council should be judged on the basis of that country's contribution to the purposes of the United Nations, in particular to the maintenance of international peace and security. Japan, as a nation committed to peace, has been contributing to international peace and security for over 50 years, and has also worked to promote and strengthen regional and international security. In accordance with its constitution, Japan has consistently adhered to an exclusively defensive security system, on the principle that it should never become a military Power. Japan does not posses any nuclear weapons, nor does it export weapons, and it has been actively involved in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

Secondly, regarding the issue of the past, we cannot accept irrelevant linkage between the issue of the past and the permanent membership of Japan. Japan strongly rejects the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea implying that Japan had committed a holocaust, which is not true.

Mr. Sin Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in connection with the remarks just made by the Japanese delegation.

In its statement earlier this morning, the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea mentioned nothing but the truth. Yes, Japan has a big purse and contributes in some ways to the activities of the United Nations. But that does not necessarily mean that those generous donations can be taken as a contribution to maintaining international peace and security. Why? The reason is simple: because any country with a big purse can contribute, but here only unselfish and good-hearted contributions are genuine and helpful contributions.

Japan now embellishes its past crimes against humanity by, for instance, distorting its past history of war crimes, while at the same time claiming that international judgments on its war crimes should be reviewed. What does all that really mean? It means that Japan very much wishes to repeat its past history of aggression and crimes against humanity.

Based on the facts of reality, we have come to believe that Japan's contributions, whatever form they may take, are nothing but a set of tricks just to hide its weird intentions. My delegation urges Japan to recognize its past crimes and to provide due compensation before attempting to realize its aspirations for permanent membership in the Security Council. That is, and will be, the only way for Japan to regain the trust it has lost in the international community.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): I do not want to take any more time, but I must reiterate and add to what I have said in reply to the allegation that has been made by the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is totally not true and which we oppose.

Japan would like to draw the attention of all members here to the statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 8 October, claiming that it had conducted a nuclear test. In addition to that country's launching of ballistic missiles in July, and despite the Security Council presidential statement strongly urging it to refrain from conducting such tests, that act, which poses a grave threat to the peace and security of not only Japan but also all of East Asia and the international community, is totally unacceptable.

On 14 October, the Security Council swiftly and unanimously adopted resolution 1718 (2006), which sent out the international community's resolute message of condemnation of that act and which included measures to be taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the other Member States of the United Nations. Japan strongly urges the Democratic People's Republic to sincerely implement the resolution. For its part, Japan intends to make the utmost effort to ensure the steady implementation of the resolution, in cooperation with other countries.

Those are the facts. All Members of the United Nations know the facts. I should not repeat this once again, but Japan's record of 50 years of adherence to the United Nations clearly shows that Japan is truly a peace-loving country that contributes to the cause of the United Nations, humankind and humanitarian affairs. I think that is a very commonly known fact. I would ask members to take that point into consideration.

Mr. Sin Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is not really the wish of my delegation to again take the floor but, having listened to the statement made by the Japanese delegation, my delegation is somewhat compelled to respond, given that the Japanese delegation was quoting facts.

Truth and hypocrisy cannot co-exist. While listening to the Japanese delegation — which is seeking in vain to cover up its dark ambition, even at this plenary meeting where Member States are discussing crucial issues — my delegation has come to a de jure conclusion that there is truly no chance for Japan to become a responsible Member State. Since a factual matter has been raised by the Japanese delegation, it is also a fact that, with the United States threat intensifying day by day, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no other option but to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in order to defend the interests of its people and State, and chose the route of developing nuclear weapons. There is no question about that.

I would like to appeal to all representatives to understand that my delegation is certain that with Japan as a permanent member of the Security Council, the world's peace and security, in particular that of Asia, will be seriously threatened and damaged.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the exercise of the right of reply.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/61/2?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has just completed its joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111, on the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. Seventy-five delegations spoke during the debate. The large number of speakers and attendees in the Hall is a clear reflection of our interest, as well as our desire, to move forward on this matter.

We began the debate by considering the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. Many Member States commended Qatar for its presidency of the Council, in particular its efforts to open up the Council's work through informal briefings. On this agenda item, many delegations recognized the complexity and relevance of the work of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Several positions emerged during the debate. First, Member States welcomed the Council's efforts to reinvigorate its working methods, as reflected by the report of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, which was initiated by Japan. Secondly, concerns were expressed that the Council's work continues to encroach upon the functions and powers of the General Assembly. Thirdly, while Member States welcomed the comprehensive nature of the report, they thought that it should be more analytical. In addition, a large number of Member States commented that they did not have sufficient time to thoroughly consider the report, due to its late submission. Overall, the majority of speakers devoted a large portion of their interventions to the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I was pleased to note that the tone of the discussion was very constructive, and that many members welcomed the invitation to reconsider this matter with a fresh and innovative perspective.

Many delegations referred to the acknowledgement of world leaders in the 2005 Outcome Document that early reform of the Security Council is an essential element of the overall reform of the United Nations. Indeed, many delegations emphasized that the time is ripe for concrete action on Security Council reform. Nevertheless, many of the views expressed remain broadly similar to well-established positions on this issue. There does, however, appear to be consensus on the need to expand the Council to better reflect our world in the twenty-first century.

However, there remains a divergence of views on whether enlargement should occur in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership or only in the latter. If the Council were expanded to include new permanent members, there are also divergent views as to whether those members should be entitled to have the power of the veto.

The debate also evolved to consider the idea of transitional arrangements.

Many members insisted on the need for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council involving both expansion and the improvement of working methods.

I have listened carefully to the comments and suggestions made by speakers with regard to the way forward. There appear to be three possible options that have been presented. First, the process could continue within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group. Secondly, the onus could be on Member States themselves to find a way forward. Thirdly, the President could lead an open and inclusive process of consultations and negotiations to reach the broadest possible agreement.

I very much appreciate those proposals and views. They confirm that members remain interested in seeing a concrete and satisfactory conclusion to this important outstanding reform agenda. I will revert to members shortly with my views on how to organize our deliberations on this matter during the sixty-first session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 111.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.